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Interview with Frank S. Ruddy

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR FRANK S. RUDDY

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is September 9, 1991 and this is an interview with Ambassador Frank S. Ruddy on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Mr. Ambassador I wonder if you would give me a little of your background—where were you born, brought up and your education.

RUDDY: I was born in New York in 1937 in Jamaica, New York and went to St. Joan of Arc grammar school in Jackson Heights, New York. St Joan's has a number of famous alumni/ae such as John Guare whose play “Six Degrees of Separation” is all the rage on Broadway; Father Tim Healy, the president of Georgetown, and on and on. I went to a Jesuit high school, Xavier, in the city. To New Yorkers “the city” is always Manhattan. I went to college at Holy Cross in Worcester. During that period the Jesuit high schools in the city (there were five of them) would not recommend students or send their transcripts to non-Catholic colleges. (West Point, Annapolis and MIT were exceptions). I completed my military obligation with The Marines (I was discharged with the exalted rank of corporal). After the Marines I got a Master's in English from N.Y.U. and taught English to pay my way through law school. I began teaching in high school and going to law school at night and in the summer and then I got to teach in college. I taught Chaucer, the English Romantics and a survey of American literature at a small liberal arts college outside

Chicago, and later I taught World Literature at Dillard University in New Orleans. Dillard is called an “historically black university,” and I taught there in 1964-65, beginning just about the time those three young fellows from Brooklyn were murdered in Mississippi. I suppose I should have been scared of Ku Klux Klan types, me, a northern white teaching at a black university, driving around in a car with New York plates on it, but I was probably too dumb to be scared. The truth is we had no trouble with anyone down south, and we drove into Mississippi many times. Dillard itself was a beautiful sprawling campus, white Georgian buildings, green lawns, probably the prettiest campus in New Orleans. It was also a very sad place, and it depressed me. In the same class I had juniors and seniors, bright enough to get selected for special graduate programs like the Woodrow Wilson scholarships, sitting right next to others who could not read. Those who could not read went back to teach in the black schools in Louisiana! That is a fact. I later taught poetry at Fordham when I was getting an LL.M. at N.Y.U. and I taught international law at Cambridge. After I got my law degree I went on for an LL.M. at N.Y.U. and a Pd.D. in international law at Cambridge (not Harvard, but the university John Harvard went to!).

Q: What was your Ph.D. in?

RUDDY: International law. I was a lawyer when I went to Cambridge. At Cambridge (and Oxford) a Ph.D. is purely a research degree. You're supposed to know the basics by the time you get there so there are no obligatory courses. You are truly on your own. You attend the lectures you want to, go to the library as often or as seldom as you want, and generally control your own destiny. Eventually, of course, you have to produce; that means finding something important and original to say about your topic and then defend what you have to say before a panel of very well read and incredulous professors. None of it is easy. After meeting my supervisor for the first time, he said: “All right then, Ruddy, get on with it.” That was it. Like the Nike ad, “Just do it.” The good part was that I had a marvelous year reading all kinds of things trying to come up with an original research project, and eventually I did. Two very well known professors, one a historian, one a lawyer, were trying to get some research done on a fascinating and very important character in the

development of what we call international law. His name was Emmerich de Vattel; (He is usually confused with Vatel the chef of Louis XIV who killed himself when the souffle fell or the fish didn't arrive.) My Vattel was Swiss; a dandy; a lady's man; a social butterfly; an undistinguished diplomat without any original ideas. Yet this man produced the most important book on international law (it was a bible to foreign offices) from the middle of the 18th century until World War I. (Read my thesis if you want to know how this all happened.) Very little had been written on Vattel, and he was a research student's dream come true. I had French, so reading Vattel (whose French was quite elegant) was no problem, and Latin as well for getting into some of the thinkers whose ideas Vattel used. It also meant reading most of the prominent French Enlightenment writers since the philosophes dealt with the bases of law (Rousseau was going to write a sequel to his Social Contract explaining the social contract among nations that created the international community, but he never got round to it). Anyway, I finished my work after three years at Cambridge and was lucky enough to get my thesis published a few years later. I even made a few bucks on it. It's still in print, and I still get those little (I emphasize little) royalty checks twice a year.

Cambridge is more than a place where I went to school. It is part of our family history. Our oldest son, Neil, was born there, and our daughter, Stephanie, is buried there. She was a little over two about the time we were getting ready to return to the States. We had Neil and her inoculated against measles, and, on the last day of the incubation period, she died. About 10 children died of the vaccine in England about that time. The cause of death was encephalitis, a fatal case of measles. The vaccine was too strong.

For a long time we couldn't think about Cambridge; now we can remember the happy times. Simon Schama, the Harvard historian who wrote the very readable Citizens about the French Revolution, was at Cambridge when I was there, and we even shared a professor when I was bouncing around trying to come up with a research project. He has an article in yesterday's (9.8.91) New York Times Magazine about that wonderfully dotty professor, Walter Ullmann, we shared. I was translating 14th century Latin court records

for him, and I think Schama was taking tutorials from him. Schama mentions sitting in Ullmann's rooms in Trinity reading his essay on the conversion of Emperor Constantine to Catholicism when there was a loud thunder clap. Ullmann ran to the window. “Do you hear it?” he asked Schama. “Do you know what it was? I hear the death knell of Byzantium.” That was Ullmann. Eccentric, absorbed in the middle ages, a great character, and, as Schama notes, a wonderful teacher who made history come alive. Cambridge had a number of eccentric professors, some giants in their field. I had an appointment one day with Professor MacKinnon of the Divinity School. He was an authority on Kant who, for reasons too boring to go into, was very important to my work. I arrived outside his office on time, but I could hear that he was talking to someone, so I waited, and waited. After an hour, I couldn't wait any more because of another appointment, I stuck my head in to interrupt him and see if I could make another appointment. He was the only one there. For all that time, he was talking to himself. I wound up working with Professor Sir Harry Hinsley and Clive Parry. Both got chairs just after I left, probably as a reward for putting up with me. Hinsley had a ritual. We got to his rooms, right above Denis Brogan's, in a 15th century tower at St. John's, he would look around the room for somewhere to put his overcoat. There never was room because the entire floor, hip high, was covered with books. He would select a low pile, file his coat neatly in quarters, and drop it. Always the same. Then to the fire for sherry and a review of my latest chapter. Hinsley always had nice things to say about my work, even when it was abominable. He was the good cop. Parry not infrequently told me that the same chapter Hinsley had praised was “rubbish.” He was the bad cop. Since I had to show my work to both, I began seeing Parry first so I could go home with the nice words of Hinsley ringing in my ears.

Q: What attracted you to the foreign affairs business of the United States?

RUDDY: At Cambridge I was working on public international law, and I wanted to continue in that field. I got a chance to work for USIA as a lawyer, and I liked that. I'd have preferred

State, but there was no room at the inn. USIA turned out to be a good choice because I could do a lot more than I could have at State.

There was also another connection. At Cambridge I volunteered to talk to student groups about the legality of the United States role in Vietnam. (There were 401 Americans at Cambridge. 400 marched against the war. I was the one who didn't.) As an international lawyer I was qualified to do that. USIA, or USIS as it is known overseas, sent me all over England to speak to university groups. I was usually booed, shouted down or simply refused the right to speak by the same audience that had invited me. It was a good experience, certainly good preparation for testifying before House committees which frequently employ a version of this tactic. Some people said I was CIA. I wish I had been. I would have been paid. As it was I got train fare. Worst of all, USIS didn't have a clue about what they were doing. The best was a trip they arranged for me to the Socialist Club of Liverpool University. In fact, the invitation was from the Communist and Socialist Club of that university. I arrived in a dark blue suit ready for “meaningful dialogue” with Fabian Socialists. I found instead people in turtlenecks, Lenin caps and work clothes, led by the London editor of Pravda, shouting me down. That was one of the places where I never got to speak. I think maybe another reason I went to USIA was that they owed me.

Q: This was from 1969-72. What type of work were you doing?

RUDDY: A lot of the usual boring stuff like contracts, which older lawyers pass off on the newcomers. I was USIA's lawyer for Africa, and that was my first exposure to Africa. USIA got me an extraordinary trip to Africa. During the Angela Davis trial in California...

Q: Would you explain what the Angela Davis trial was?

RUDDY: She was the person who was tried as a principal in the murder of a judge in Marin County, California. During the trial of the so-called Soledad brothers, they were called the Soledad brothers because they were in Soledad prison, there was an escape attempt. A judge was killed. Angela Davis was implicated in planning the escape. She

made the FBI's “10 Most Wanted List” and was tried as a principal because under California law a person who participates in a crime, either helping people get away or planning a crime, is treated as a principal. Since she was black, the American left saw a great propaganda opportunity and made a big fuss about it, “ U.S. racism, legal lynching, the Scottsboro boys revisited, etc.” The Bloc countries broadcast the same propaganda worldwide, concentrating in Africa. (Angela Davis later ran three times as the Communist Party's candidate for U.S. vice president.)

To counter Bloc disinformation, USIA sent two lawyers to Africa . I went to Anglophone Africa, probably because of my Cambridge connection, and lectured at universities from Ethiopia to Nigeria down to South Africa, just basically to try to explain the US position on that. They sent another lawyer into Francophone Africa.

The intensity of propaganda arriving in Africa from Eastern Europe on this case amazed me. When I would get to places like Accra or Lagos, the students all had copies of the book, Soledad Brothers, written by one of the defendants in the Soledad trial, and, of course, presenting himself and his fellow defendants and political prisoners, victims of a racist system, etc. The Bloc had funded the distribution of the book throughout Africa. My job was simply to explain the processes of American justice and hope that the Africans I addressed would see the Davis trial as quite a normal and reasonable procedure to deal with someone implicated in the murder of a judge. In addition, the tour was my first visit to Africa. Have you ever been to Africa?

Q: No I haven't.

RUDDY: It gets in your blood. It is such an exciting place once you have been there. The French call this feeling, the need to get back to Africa, le mal d'Afrique. We were talking to someone the other night asking that if I had a chance to be an ambassador in any place in the world where would I go. I said Africa. It is just the most exciting place that there ever

was. At least that's my opinion, and that opinion started from that time, that Angela Davis lecture tour, from just being there.

Q: At that time why did it strike you as being so exciting?

RUDDY: I suppose first, the mystery of it. You know, growing up with the Tarzan movies and all that stuff. To actually be in this exotic place, I suppose that was it. Once you are actually there and try to put things into perspective you can't. It is so big. It just overcomes you.

Q: Did you find on landing that you sort of wanted to move in and help things get going?

RUDDY: No, oh no! I went to Ghana first where I stayed in a hotel in Accra, in a room where the door wouldn't lock. That was a good metaphor for my first visit to Africa. This was a strange place, and I didn't know how Africans viewed white people like me or what they would do (remember: I grew up in New York City). As I traveled around I felt as vulnerable as a person in a hotel room that wouldn't lock. There were also awful diseases. While I was there some American AID worker died of blackwater fever. What was blackwater fever? Would I get it too? Throughout the tour I continued to be wary of everything. I didn't want so much to change Africa, I just wanted to survive it. Ghana, the Gold Coast, turned out to be a good place to start. The markets in Accra brought you the real people of Africa, exotic and wonderful (and some not so wonderful) smells, the crush of Africans buying and selling. The beaches and clear blue water were right out of Conde-Nast's travel magazine. A few hours in the slave museum in Accra teaches you more about slavery than a shelf of books, and it is, or at least was when I was there, politically incorrect. There were some (to me at least) surprising African culprits along with the usual suspects.

There were some funny things as well. I had just finished a television appearance in Accra a few weeks after a coup d'etat. Some fellow I later learned was the president of the country, General or Colonel Acheampong, went storming through the studio firing

TV people right and left (it was government TV). It seems the president, dressed in a British style military uniform, safari jacket, short trousers and high socks, had just made a television address to the country to assure all Ghanaians that he was in charge, all was well, etc. It might have gone well except for the fact that he gave the address sitting behind a desk. Someone forgot to put up a modesty panel, and everyone in Ghana saw his short-panted knees knocking together as he tried to inspire the nation. He was not amused.

From Ghana I went all the way across the continent to Ethiopia. This was while Haile Selassie was still there. My lecture was to Ethiopian judges and lawyers in a city called Asmara, next to the Red Sea. An Army helicopter was supposed to take me over the Red Sea, but The Eritrean Liberation Army was active in the area and we had to turn back. From Asmara I took a DC 3, called appropriately the “vomit comet” for the way it bounced through the Ethiopian skies. Much of Ethiopia is like our West, with mountains and canyons and very rough terrain. That's why the Ethiopian guerrillas were so successful in attacking, then evading, Mussolini's soldiers a half century ago. The terrain does not make for friendly skies, however, and that's why the DC 3's were a godsend. They can go anywhere. If you look out the window you feel you're on the Giant Teacup ride. If you don't, you see people in various stages of distress and hear the ululations of the women as the plane hits another air pocket. The only ones unaffected were the goats and chickens and other animals which traveled right up there with the passengers. The plane stops at the great old cities of Ethiopia, places like Axum, Gondar, Lalibela. Entry to these once magnificent cities was through airfields that were nothing more than large dusty fields. I thought of the poem by Shelley, Ozymandias, another African “king of kings,” who insolently inscribed his own monument with the words: “Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!” Shelley described the irony: “Nothing beside remains. Round the decay of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, the lone and level sands stretch far away.” I spent a day in Lalibela, traveled up a mountain to a Coptic shrine by donkey, visited St Michael's, a giant church built out of a boulder, from the outside in ! I stayed at what passed for a motel, and people knocked at the door during the evening trying to sell me Coptic crosses

and other national treasures which were supposed to come from St Michael's. I probably should have turned those folks in to the police, but I couldn't bring myself to do it. The lives of so many people I encountered, living in tukels, round wattle huts resembling miniature Norman towers (the wealthy living in two- story tukels), were going about their daily business as they might have 2,000 years ago, as if there had been no industrial revolution, no communications revolution, no Europe or America. Ethiopia was a time machine, and the dial was set for “way back.”

I then went down to South Africa to lecture to law students at Witwatersrand and the University of Pretoria. I had the good fortune to run into a friend of mine from Cambridge, John Dugard, who was, is, a lawyer very active in the civil rights movement in South Africa. He was at this time the lawyer for Desmond Tutu, as I later learned, although I wouldn't have known Desmond Tutu then if I tripped over him. Dugard took me to see the pass courts, an institution which happily no longer exists, and I was one of very few foreigners to see them in operation. In apartheid law and theory, blacks were supposed to live in the black homelands or bantustans. They needed a pass to get into the cities. Those found without passes or with expired passes were hauled into the pass courts, fined and sent back to the homelands. That, as I say, was the theory. The reality was that the cities could not continue to function without black labor from the homelands. The judge passing sentence on blacks for pass violations probably had illegal blacks working in his house. In fact, generations of black South Africans grew up in the cities and as city slickers, they knew no more about farming or grazing, the kinds of things people did on the homelands, than a cabby in New York City. Everyone knew this was the case. The pass courts were just a way for the government to save face while winking at its own apartheid laws. The pass laws and pass courts were new to me, and, in addition to being so stupid, they seemed such a cruel game. The police rounded up a token number of blacks without passes, put them in holding cells, brought them into court (that's where I saw them), weak, shabbily dressed, fined them, sent them back to the homelands, and then they would return from the homelands, and the process would start all over again. It

was like the judgment of Christ, the worse thing I ever saw in South Africa. Of course, if they really wanted to eliminate the system, they would have imposed severe punishments on the employers. But that never was the idea.

What the visitor saw of apartheid was mostly inconvenience. If you want a cab, and you're in a hurry, you couldn't jump in any empty cab (as I attempted to do when late for a reception by the U.S. ambassador). It had to be a racially correct cab. The cab I jumped into couldn't take me because it was a black cab. (The bureaucracy and costs required to keep this system going were immense.) These kinds of things for a foreigner were stupidities, inconveniences, but for the South Africans affected by them, the effects were devastating, families separated, that sort of thing.

Q: What was the reaction of the people you were seeing after you explained American justice?

RUDDY: It was very different from what I had expected. To prepare myself for tough questions, I had done a lot of research at the Library of Congress and read the criminal law of all the countries I was going to visit as well as the criminal law of the Eastern European countries which were making such a stink about the Davis trial. I paid particular attention to the laws involving accessories and the penalty for accessories. Not surprisingly, they were basically identical to our own (California's in the Davis case) with little variations here and there. That research paid off in Ghana, at The University of Legon in Accra, where I was giving a talk to the law students. When I finished talking about the Davis trial, there was a very loud and dramatic objection from a student. He was carrying on about “the organized lynching California was carrying out on Angela Davis...,” etc., and losing control. I suspect the students may have agreed with him, but his out-of-control manner lost him the audience's sympathy. I could sense that and felt I could toy with him a little bit, something I never would have done if the audience were with him. I asked him, relative to his outburst, “Can you really disagree with the reasonableness of a law that says that a person who participates in a crime by “supplying the wherewithal

to commit that crime or providing counsel on how to commit the crime " should be tried as a principal? Is that really such a bad law?" "Yes," he responded. It is outrageous. It is fascism." "But what I just recited to you," I said, "is Ghanaian law." At that point the chairman of the meeting, the dean of the law school, intervened and told the young man to sit down and keep quiet. You don't get those kinds of "gotchas" often, at least I sure didn't, and the African students I faced all across Africa were pretty cynical.

There wasn't much of a difference between the student audiences in black Africa and the in South Africa. The students were just critical of the United States. It was more or less dealing with hormones and with kids who were 18; it didn't too much matter where they were. I was from the Establishment and they were against it. Pretty much like colleges in the States. The only place that surprised me was at the University of Pretoria where I felt the students were brain dead. They accepted whatever I said...they really didn't act like university students. But every place else, including the university students in Cape Town and Wits in Johannesburg, the students were critical, cynical and pretty well informed.

Q: When you were Assistant General Counsel, who was the head of USIA?

RUDDY: Frank Shakespeare.

Q: How did you feel...you were a lawyer sort of sitting off on one side...how did you feel about how USIA was run?

RUDDY: First of all, you have to remember that I was in the trenches. I will give you my view from the trenches since there doesn't seem to be any sand-bagging in this interview. Frank Shakespeare is a good friend. When he was Ambassador in Portugal, before he went to the Vatican, my sons and I went over from Madrid for a couple of days. I thought he was terribly competent. I had to write statements for him dealing for various committees. I would spend a long time learning about satellites, or whatever we were testifying about.

Q: By satellites you are referring to satellites in the sky as opposed to satellites in the Soviet Union.

RUDDY: Oh yes, communication satellites. There was also at that point a big to-do about the international law of satellites and what we could legally do with things called direct broadcast satellites, satellites that could theoretically (I emphasize theoretically) bypass state censors and broadcast directly into people's homes. The Russian solution was simple. They said they would blast any such satellites out of the sky. It was a classic Cold War scenario, and USIA had the point in the debate. Shakespeare was called to testify on the question , and I killed myself preparing his statement. I met him for the first time as I rode up to the Hill with him. I realized in the ride up, he had never read my magnum opus. I thought he was going to get killed. I was wrong. I guess his years at CBS taught him about the technical side of international broadcasting, including satellites, and nobody had to teach him about the Russians. He was a pro.

When I got back from Africa after the Davis lectures, I told him about Roy Wilkins. I had been with him in Cape Town and heard him lecture. He was watched every where he went and his words were screened by the South African...

Q: Wilkins was...?

RUDDY: The head of NAACP at the time. He didn't have anything bad to say about the United States. He said that American blacks at that time had the right to vote, and they were going to use it to make changes. He dwelled on the achievements that American blacks had made and the progress they were going to make. He spoke that way of blacks in the United States as models of what could be achieved in South Africa and about the crossroads that South Africa would have to come to, crossroads between revolution and accommodation. The important thing, I thought, was that here was a fellow who could really have blasted the United States for its treatment of him and his race, but he had too

much class to do that. He was too good an American to do that on foreign soil. He dwelled on the good things.

When I got back and mentioned to Shakespeare how impressed I was by Wilkins, Shakespeare's reaction was typical. Out came the old blue felt pen, and he immediately wrote Wilkins a note saying how pleased he was to hear this report. That is how Shakespeare was. He was decisive. When things were good he would react quickly to them. He was fun to work with.

There was a post script to the Wilkins story by the way. Congressman Diggs of Michigan who was then a member and possibly chairman of the African Affairs Subcommittee in the House, and several of his cohorts complained bitterly of Wilkins' failure to excoriate the United States treatment of American blacks, called him an Uncle Tom, etc. Diggs was to my mind an airhead, and I think he actually wound up in jail. Diggs charges were pure demagoguery. Despite his bloviating, Diggs had never read, or couldn't remember, the words of Franz Fanon, the Che Guevara of North Africa. Although Fanon proclaimed the need for revolutionary violence almost everywhere, he drew the line in The United States. His words on the situation of blacks in the USA were remarkably similar to Wilkins'. Fanon wrote that American blacks were better off than those in France because in the United States “the Negro battles and is battled. There are laws that, little by little, are invalidated under the Constitution. There are other laws that forbid certain forms of discrimination. And we can be sure nothing is going to be given free.”

Q: USIA in those days was relatively a happy ship wasn't it?

RUDDY: From what I could see. Remember, I was just a lawyer and in the civil service, not the Foreign Service. I didn't know much about The Foreign Service or the exams people had to take to get into State, USIA, etc. As a lawyer you do get a look at it all, but I wasn't examining it from a management point of view. It was just a job and these foreign service folks were my colleagues .... One thing I thought very interesting about USIA was

that I used to car pool with some people who were, I confess, extremely boring, but when they talked about where they had been, what they had done, foreign characters they met, they became interesting. What they had observed made them interesting and their jobs seem exciting. If the business could turn these folks into great story tellers, I thought there must be something pretty good about it.

Q: You were then moved for a while, in 1972, to dealing with Congressional liaison?

RUDDY: In 1972 I wanted to work on the Nixon campaign. Frank Shakespeare said that there are only two people you want to work for—John Mitchell or Jim Magruder -otherwise you will end up blowing up balloons. He arranged an interview with Len Garment at the White House. I had written quite a few articles for USIA, and they went all over the world. I can say, and it's so long ago and so minor a distinction that I hope I can say I it without appearing to boast, that I was USIA's hottest writer. I was the only one, and a hated lawyer (is that redundant?) at that, who had pre-clearance from the press and publications people. That meant they had enough faith in my work that I didn't have to check with them before sending something out. You know how USIA does, or at least, did those stories. Someone like me would write a story on some hot American topic, The Pentagon Papers, for example, and USIA would send them to USIS posts overseas (USIA is called USIS overseas; don't ask why.) At post our people would use the material, of course, and adapt it, and frequently give them my article to some influential local journalist and hope he would use it in his column. It was common for foreign journalists to run my article intact, without so much as a comma changed, under their bylines. I had done a great deal of professional writing, good publishable stuff, and my proof was that all these people around the world were publishing my work under their name. I was quite confident when I went to see Len Garment, but I got nowhere. I didn't even get offered a job blowing up balloons. I was really crushed but, of course, it turned out in light of Watergate to have been the best thing that could have happened to me. I should probably have worn it as a badge of honor that I didn't make the cut because they really did hire some Bozo's.

Q: The names you just mentioned, for anyone who might not be familiar with the Watergate scandal during the Nixon Administration during the 1972 campaign, are people who were very prominent in the Watergate blowup.

RUDDY: Yes, indeedy. John Mitchell was the head of the reelection campaign, the Committee to Re-elect the President, which was called CREEP by its enemies. I am not sure what McGruder's exact title was, but he went to jail. John Mitchell was convicted as well and has since died. All of these people became very virtuous when they were convicted with the exception of Mitchell, who was a man about it as was Gordon Liddy. Liddy was a character, but he was the only guy to say, “I knew what I was doing, I committed a crime, I am sorry I got caught, but I am not going to rat on my friends.” He got hit with a very long prison sentence by Judge “Maximum John” Sirica while the rest of them came up whining and got off with much lighter sentences. Anyway, I didn't get the job at the White House.

Shakespeare asked me if I would like to work in the White House for Clay Whitehead who was the head of the Office of Telecommunication Policy (OTP). I did and was their senior attorney for a while. I was interviewed for the job and hired by Antonin Scalia, who is now on the Supreme Court. He was the OTP General Counsel at the time. He had gone to high school with me, about two years ahead of me. I was at The White House for about a year.

While at OTP I was called back to USIA sporadically to write a lot of Watergate material because the General Counsel of USIA, Gordon Strachan, had been accused of being the bag man in Watergate. He was obviously not the one to be writing disinterested accounts of the investigation.

Q: Bag man is term for carrying money.

RUDDY: Yes, that was the term used. He was a very young, very pompous young man. Not a bad fellow. Just overcome by Washington, the power he had and the immaturity to

deal with it. He was disbarred, but I think he has been reinstated in Utah. I hope so. As I say he wasn't an evil person, just a young kid over his head.

Q: What was your impression of the effect of Watergate on the USIA side of our operations?

RUDDY: I don't think it could have mattered much less to the functioning or morale at USIA. The White House Aparatchiks and individuals like Strachan, who, as I mentioned had the reputation of being very arrogant, virtually ignored USIA. Strachan, twenty something, told Jim Keogh, The Director of USIA, and a respected journalist in his own right, that he (Strachan) would take care of him when he could, but his real concern was with the White House. It was a situation where you almost had an SS officer telling a Wehrmacht officer what to do. Keogh had come down from Time where he was a senior editor. He was a media pro. Strachan was just an ambitious yuppie who wound up getting very badly burned, although I think the experience made him a changed man.

This kind of ambition isn't a partisan thing. I dealt with some real lulus in the Carter Administration when I was at Exxon, and I saw the same phenomenon among some of the young hotshots in the 80s when President Reagan's Administration began. Young people who think they have been appointed with a mission to change the world tend to become terribly self important. That's Ruddy's law. You can quote me. The worst manifestation of puppy-political-arrogance, to create an Agnewism, I ever saw, however, was in the current (Bush) Administration. Many of these young folks are not only out of touch with the people of the country, but they go out of their way to offend and drive away the Reagan folks who are their natural allies. They will learn. They all do, eventually. I suppose, at Energy, at least (The Department of Energy) where I was working, there was some excuse for the young people's attitude: The example of the incoming (and current) Secretary of Energy, James Watkins. Mr Watkins, or rather Admiral Watkins as he insisted, made it a point to denigrate the Reagan at DOE, and particularly that of his predecessor, John Herrington. John Herrington is a strong man, but he's also a gentleman and would never unnecessarily

embarrass a predecessor, or anyone for that matter, Republican or Democrat. Watkins was like a big girl, whining publicly about all the problems he inherited. And he really was a piece of work. I hope there aren't many more in the military like him. He had a staff of thousands, not really thousands, of course, 37 was the number I heard, of young people who treated him like a maharajah and presidential appointees as beggars who should be content whenever they might touch the hem of his garment. His chief of staff, Polly Gault, could have gotten a part in Macbeth. A young Bella Abzug, make-up by Sherwin Williams, a raver and a ranter with a mouth that would make Eddie Murphy blush. Watkins himself was, of course, quite content with this state of affairs. With his 6 feet, 4 inches or so, and his vainglorious ways, he always reminded me of Inspector Clousseau in the body of Charles de Gaulle.

Q: I am right now transcribing an interview with Ambassador Henry Villard, who is 94, but is talking about how he got dumped on by the young people of the Kennedy Administration. He was too old. The Kennedy Administration thought ambassadors should be in their 40s, if that. Each administration brings their own arrogance with them for a while.

Did you get involved in dealing with Vietnam? What was your impression of the USIA side of Vietnam?

RUDDY: No, I didn't get too involved with Vietnam issues. I wrote a book review of Telford Taylor's Nuremberg and Vietnam which compared U.S. actions in Vietnam to the war crimes that led to the trial of high ranking Nazis at Nuremberg....Do you remember that book on Vietnam? I thought it was an absolute fraud and said so in my review. I wrote a review of his book when I was at USIA for the American Bar Association. If I had written a review in praise of Telford Taylor's book, the ABA Journal would have published it just as it was. But since it was critical and suggested that Taylor was sensationalizing his argument to sell the book, as well as engaging in some very sloppy scholarship, they ran a counter

review. They couldn't not run my review, but they weakened its effect as much as they could.

I mentioned earlier that when I was in Cambridge I went around England talking about Vietnam and the legality of the U.S. position. Those were the kind of things I did. It was a great experience. All these years later I often think of that period. I learned a lot from it. I learned a lot about gullibility, dealing with crowds, especially hostile one, all that was helpful (especially in appearances before Congressional committees.) Just kidding !

Q: You left USIA in 1973.

RUDDY: From 1972-73 I was at the White House and then I came back because USIA had a new General Counsel, Edward Hidalgo. Hidalgo was a Republican then, but changed parties to work for Carter and become Secretary of Navy. He became a Republican again when President Reagan came into office and wanted to be ambassador to Mexico. Of course, they saw through him. But to return to the question, when I knew him he had just become USIA's General Counsel, and I was brought back as the Deputy General Counsel to basically run the office. He was an experienced lawyer, but didn't have a lot experience with USIA or with government in general. So I ran the day-to-day business of the office; I was sort of the chief cook and bottle washer, and he would deal with important political issues. I did that for about a year.

At that point Exxon called. They were actually calling to talk to my predecessor who had long since gone, and they wound up talking to me. There was an opportunity in Houston and I took it. I had had enough of government for a while.

Q: What was your impression, you were with Exxon from what?

RUDDY: 1974-81.

Q: What was your impression of this big multinational organization, how well equipped was it and responsive to a very volatile world? OPEC was reaching its peak in those days and there were a lot of challenges in different countries.

RUDDY: I liked Exxon very much. It was a good company to work for. One of the disappointments that I had with Exxon was that it wasn't as aggressive as I had hoped it might be. Mobil, for example,...and all the employees at Exxon cheered for Mobil's positions...took quite an aggressive stand on the harshly anti-business bias of the Carter regulations and went to war in the press, attacking the economic absurdities the Carter Administration was imposing. Exxon never got out in front on issues like that. Exxon, through its foundations, funded many of the organizations that were attacking Exxon and businesses everywhere. I never could understand that. Working for Exxon was, in some ways, as routine as working for the government. They hired very good people, almost always over qualified for their positions, and many more than they actually needed. They had very good lawyers, and over 200 of them in Houston alone, many more than they needed. They had many more engineers than they needed. They had many more everything than they needed. Since the employees were generally very good at what they were hired to do, they became bored when there was so little to challenge them. It was in this respect that Exxon resembled government work. Many people who worked for Exxon, people like me and many others, found other things to do (I edited a professional legal journal for The American Bar Association in my free time, and Exxon picked up all costs, going so far as to provide a part-time secretary to handle the considerable correspondence.) Others “retired on the job;” That is, they came to work each day, did mechanical chores and went home. A great waste really. Advancement was very slow because there were so many people just as good as you were, and it wasn't what you would call an exciting a place to work. It was a sound company, however, a decent company that took it's public responsibilities seriously, and treated its employees well. This thing that happened to Exxon in Valdez is just incredible. That's not how Exxon does business. It was a terrible aberration.

Q: We are talking about an oil spill in Alaska.

RUDDY: The Valdez was the name of the tanker that went aground in Prince William Sound in Alaska. The captain apparently lost control. I am not sure where the liability was ultimately found to lie. There was a very modest fine on the captain. In any event, that sort of thing, a ship captain with a history of alcoholism, for Exxon was extraordinary. I spent three months with several other senior executives of Exxon just touring the country to visit other companies to review their safety standards, just to keep Exxon up-to-date with the latest safety techniques. That is how they did things. It is a very waspish company, and they don't tolerate vices like drinking on the job, sometimes even off the job. People noticed how executives behaved, how much they drank at Exxon functions, and getting the reputation of a drinker, drug user, philanderer, etc. was a sure way to block advancement. So, it is extraordinary what happened at Valdez.

Exxon is a very decent company which employs, on the whole, nice people; very competent people. If you finally got real responsibility, you could expect to be at the office early, leave late and spend your weekends there. Upper management at Exxon was a seven day a week job.

Q: Did you become involved in the Reagan campaign?

RUDDY: Yes, I was for Reagan in 1976, the year he lost the nomination to Gerald Ford. I remember driving back from Corpus Christi, the night of his famous speech when he was invited up on the stage by Ford. I had been captivated by him. I used to do a lot more speaking when I was in Houston, and I would listen to tapes just to get the rhythm of good speakers. Some of those speeches I listened to were Reagan's, and I thought whoever did his material, was a master. Maybe his speaking style got me interested in his positions. I don't remember. I was also working at that time for a right to life group called Life Advocates in Houston.

Q: Right to life in today's jargon means opposed to abortion.

RUDDY: Yes. I used to tell picketers and protesters what their First Amendment rights were, what the police and property owners could legally tell them to do, that sort of thing. I also appeared on television and radio and testified before the Texas legislature. As a matter of fact, the Texas legislature passed a law which I wrote dealing with the rights of survivors of abortion, if you can believe that. There is such a thing, people who are not completely aborted. It is still law in Texas. Reagan was, of course, very strong on right to life, so there was that connection.

When he was elected I got a chance to come to Washington. I was interviewed for the Legal Adviser position at State. I made the short list, the final 6 or 7, but no cigar. Davis Robinson got the job. What then happened was that there was a problem of Senate confirmation for the head of AID, Peter McPherson, and, I think, for Chester Crocker, as well. I'm not sure whether Crocker was involved. Some senators, Jesse Helms prominent among them, wanted to have a Conservative in AID as a sort of counterbalance if Peter McPherson, who is a Republican but of the Rockefeller-Northeast Establishment variety, were to be confirmed. So I was the token Conservative at USAID. I didn't know quite what I was getting into at the time. It was probably a pretty stupid thing to have done. But I was offered the job to head his Africa Bureau in AID, and as the quid pro quo, McPherson would be confirmed as the Administrator. And that is how I got there. I guess I was chosen for Africa (as opposed to some other area) because I had been there, and although I didn't know much about Africa I probably knew more than the others being considered. I was an Assistant Administrator which is an Assistant Secretary of State level job. The Houston radio station described it...I remember listening to it one morning while I was shaving...as a low level job, and probably in the general scheme of things, given all the jobs in Washington, that probably was accurate. I guess if you have to explain how important your job is, it isn't. So that is how I returned to Washington.

Q: When you got there, was the thrust of our dealings with Africa different under the Reagan Administration than under the Carter Administration?

RUDDY: Not really. That, I think, was the biggest surprise. I felt that under McPherson there wasn't much leadership at all. I confess to no fondness for the man, his strange dietary habits, (he used to sit during meetings drinking glasses of very hot water), his problems pronouncing foreign names (we sat in anticipation at staff meetings for what had become standard mutilations of friendly nations: Guatemala became something like Gwala-mala, Zimbabwe was Zim-bwab-WEE, with the last “wee” hitting a high note, and on and on. It was like a game, and people could not look at one another when McPherson was speaking for fear of bursting out laughing. You know how being unable to laugh makes it more difficult not to laugh. More importantly, on substantive issues, I lost all confidence in him as a leader and manager. So I am prejudiced. I admit it. I felt he had betrayed the whole Reagan agenda. One of the biggest controversies that we had was over population control in Africa. The law said very clearly that we were not supposed to force population control on African countries but to make assistance available to those countries that wanted it. The population reference bureau, hardly a conservative institution, had done polls during my watch at AID, that showed that of the countries in the Sub-Sahara something in the neighborhood of 7 or 8 wanted population control assistance. The rest were very happy and some wanted more children.

My point was simply that AID shouldn't be forcing population control programs on Africans. If they want them, the law says we have to make it available, but we should not be coercing them. AID's position was that we were to push this problem. If you can believe it, AID had even conditioned levels of aid to several East African countries on their accepting population control programs. This kind of pressure was not only inhumane, taking advantage of the poverty in these countries, it was clearly and absolutely illegal. I sent out cables countermanding these policies, and since their author is quite ill now, I will leave it at that. In addition, I didn't think it made much sense to treat population as the

problem when it was, in all likelihood, the symptom. Historically, most of Africa's population problems are really man made: Variations of Marxist economic systems that can't work, civil wars in places like The Sudan, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and, of course, the predictable and avoidable famines in places like The Sahel, caused by blundering and incompetent governments. If you ever want to see demonstrated the truth of one of those three great lies, “I'm from the government, and I'm here to help you,” go to Africa. But you see the emaciated faces of starving people in posters and television, and the natural reaction is to agree, “Yes, there are just too many people to feed over there.” That's what you're supposed to think and why those kinds of campaigns are so successful. Take China, everybody's candidate for a greatly over populated country. Is it ? China that has the same population density as Pennsylvania. Is it really a question of population or is it a question of form of government? You can compare China with Taiwan which has a greater population and say why isn't China doing better.

I personally thought pushing population programs was a terrible abuse of individual freedoms, and amounted to subsidizing and supporting incompetent and very oppressive governments whose only way of achieving progress was not to increase the economy to meet the needs of the population but to cut down the population to fit a meager economy. But in any event, I thought the President had spoken on that. I thought the position of our Administration was fairly clear but there continued to be a big to-do on that within AID. You must remember that the AID career people were brought up on government-to-government programs. That's all they knew. Many came from The Peace Corps. Hardly any had worked in real jobs, where business made the money that paid the taxes that paid their salaries. Their idea was good (Help poor people), but the only way they knew to achieve that was to have the government do it. When the government said population control was the answer to Third World poverty, and that was AID's answer for years, they bought it, not out of some ideological motive, but because they trusted in the wisdom of government. Remember. You don't have a lot of independent thinkers at AID. So, when someone new, like me, came along and said we have to rethink our population policy,

they were not buying. And when the saw The Administrator was taking the old Democratic line on population control, they knew where they came out. McPherson and I went back and forth on this issue, and I felt, and told him to his face, that he had sold out to the Rockefeller population type interests. There was continual tension there, as you can imagine.

Q: Could you give a little feel of the power dynamics at that time within AID? You have an Administrator who you felt was relatively weak. Who would be pushing for this? Was it professionals in AID, people from outside...?

RUDDY: It wasn't that the Administrator had to be weak. He actually had a very strong position, a bully pulpit if he chose to use it. I thought his weakness was that he wasn't upholding the Administration's position, Reagan's position. For example, in Cancun...

Q: Cancun was a conference on an island off Mexico concerning economic development around 1981.

RUDDY: Right. The President's message was that you could trust in the good sense of people. The individual is foolish, but the species is wise as Edmund Burke said. There is a lot of wisdom and that when, for example, Africans are having children, those Africans have to live with those decisions, with those children, but the experts that USAID sends over don't. Experts can come in and say you must to this and that and then they go home. In Africa, 80 percent of the farms in Africa are 5 hectares or less. It is a family operation. Infant mortality used to be extremely high. Having a large number of children made good economic sense in most cases. In that context, the Africans probably know what they are doing; they are not just propagating mindlessly, as the population crisis people would have you believe. I thought respecting the good sense of Africans was quite consistent with the Reagan philosophy. I didn't know it at the time, but an economist from Chicago would win a Nobel Prize for demonstrating the good economic sense exercised in daily household decisions. That was my point, but I didn't have any Nobel laureate to quote.

On the other side, you had the Erhlich (of The Population Bomb) mentality, a type that goes back to The Enlightenment thinkers. These folks have a problem reconciling the rationality of people with their actions and therefore must step in and guide the under developed rationally until they are in a position to act for themselves. “We know what is best for you” is their motto, and they see their role as that of deciding what is best for people everywhere, especially in The Third World. You know their propaganda: “The earth is running out of vital natural resources. Here on life boat or space ship earth (choose your own metaphor) we have to conserve our precious resources because when these are gone there won't be anymore available.” You've heard it a million times. Again, if you read somebody like Julian Simon, you see the nonsense of Erhlich's position. The naivete of the reading public is amazing. Here you have Ehrlich, a lepidopterist, a butterfly specialist, and, all of a sudden he passes himself off as an expert on the environment, economics, sociology, and he gets away with it. Can you imagine a professor of butterflies walking into the dean's office of some university and saying: “This term, instead of butterflies, I want to teach economics, or geology or earth sciences?” He would be laughed out of the office, but the same person can write a book, and magazine editors and talk show hosts who don't know much about science or the scientific method, fall all over themselves getting out the message (If, it is apocalyptic and/or sensational, as it usually is, see, e.g. The Population Bomb.) Dixy Lee Ray, the former AEC Commissioner, Washington University Professor, Assistant Secretary of State, has a book about to come out, or, maybe it's published by now, on the subject of the selling of pseudo science in America. On the other hand, every once in a while there is a piece which deflates the popular pseudo-scientists. I don't know if you saw the article in the New York Times last December describing the bet Julian Simon, the fellow I mentioned earlier, a professor at Maryland, made with Tom Ehrlich 10 years ago on whether the price of the six important metals would go up or down in the next decade. If The Population Bomb thesis was correct, as population increased and exhausted precious metals, the price of those metals would rise as they became scarcer. Conversely, if the prices did not rise, it was a sign that they were not becoming scarcer and the population bomb hysteria was bunk. The New York Times Magazine, in a

long article on the bet reported that and Ehrlich lost on every single metal. Yet, reported The Times, even though Simon's stock was rising in the academic community, Ehrlich's doomsday mentality still captivated the general public. I could add that it still captivates the State Department and USAID establishments as well. I thought this kind of pessimism and defeatism was the exact opposite of what President Reagan stood for: people are not the problem; inefficient, oppressive governments are. President Reagan's approach was to empower people, unlike the Carter Administration's Global 2000 Report, which saw people as a problem getting in the way of dirigiste governments. When there got to be too many people, you just had to lop off the excess. Take a look at China's forced abortion programs. Anyway, what concerned me was that McPherson bought the Global 2000 approach completely.

Q: Was this the Rockefeller...?

RUDDY: Yes, in the same sense that Keynesian economists called Keynesians, you could describe this approach as “Rockefelleran” or whatever the adjective is for Rockefeller. It was certainly an approach to global problems the Rockefellers supported and continue to support. The Global 2000 Report, itself, was something created at the end of the Carter Administration. Essentially, it updated the gloomy and discredited Club of Rome report from the 70s. Even though the Club of Rome analyses and predictions were so egregiously wrong, and proved to be so, in their report on the state of the world, the doomsayers were never in doubt that the sky was indeed falling, resources were running out, population was getting out of control and that only super government, like Superman, could save the day. It's really a very old approach going back at least to The Enlightenment. Faced with the reality that reliance on reason was not the great panacea it was cracked up to be, (some people were not too bright) one school of philosophies realized that what these sheep needed were shepherds to point them in the right direction until they were capable of reasoning for themselves. The philosophies appointed themselves shepherds since the lack lacked the capacity to choose intelligently. You see the same phenomenon in those environmental-population zealots who somehow

see themselves chosen to lead humanity out of the wilderness. That's the kind of person who looks to state control as a solution to every problem because he has no confidence in the good sense and judgment of ordinary people (read sheep).

The Reagan position, and I think a more sensible position, was human ingenuity will solve most of the world's economic problems if it is has the incentives and is given the freedom to do it. Most of the problems described in the Club of Rome and the Global 2000 Report were the result of human errors, things like oppressive governments and unreal economics, and if the basic problems were dealt with, as opposed to just dealing with the symptoms, real solutions could be found. For example, is population the cause or a symptom of China's economic stagnation? If you say the cause, how do you explain the prosperity of places like Hong Kong and Taiwan where there is the same racial group and a much higher population density? Anyway that was a basic difference that I had with the bureaucrats and power structure at AID. I think I made some progress in getting the senior officials in the Africa Bureau to understand what was meant by a free market economy, even if they didn't buy it. I organized departmental wide seminars, debates would be a better word, on a wide range of issues. I brought in people like Max Singer, Julian Simon, Lord Bauer, Herman Kahn (I don't remember everyone, but that's the kind of guests I had), and they would challenge some AID policy or position on economic grounds. I remember well when I invited Max Singer, a forceful critic of Global 2000, to debate it with the very people from USAID and State who had authored the report. I got three calls, from McPherson's office, from Jay Morris who was McPherson's #2, and from Nyle Brady, the USAID science advisor, asking me to call off the seminar. I said I would if anyone could convince me it was a bad idea to debate the economic sense of a highly flawed document which still influenced USAID policy, or, if any of them, (they were all my superiors) would go on record with a written order directing me to cancel it. Of course, they were all scared to death of going on record to squelch a debate on Global 2000, and the debate went off as planned. Singer annihilated the State/USAID contingent and got people talking about Global 2000 instead of just accepting its findings blindly. I called that progress. In another

sense these kinds of victories were few and far between, and I began to think it wouldn't have made any difference if Abby Hoffman or William F. Buckley were running AID.

Q: Abby Hoffman being a member of the extreme left and William F. Buckley being on the extreme right.

RUDDY: It wouldn't make any difference if either one were running USAID, or, I should say, if either were titular head of USAID. The bureaucracy runs USAID. Buckley, Hoffman, you name the director, the results would be the same. Some of the USAID bureaucrats might really think they are in favor of private enterprise, but, as somebody said of the conservationists, their heart in the right place but they wouldn't know an entrepreneur if he kicked them in the ass. Most USAID people have had no experience in business, by and large; they never had to create products people would buy or provide services people would pay to use, and, of course, they never had to meet a payroll. A great many USAID have worked for the government all their lives, beginning with the Peace Corps or spending their whole career with AID. Their idea of getting things done was having the government do it. For these people to go out and encourage people to create wealth through private enterprise instead of relying on the government to supply what they needed was not, is not, something these folks are equipped to do. They had never done it themselves. Like Rush Limbaugh talking about the virtues of jogging, it was not part of their world. Aid folks were exactly the wrong people to sell that message. It wasn't that there was any conspiracy or that they were somehow acting behind the scenes to subvert free enterprise initiatives. You can't expect an organization like USAID to promote free enterprise any more than you can expect the Post Office to understand what makes Federal Express or UPS tick.

Q: Going back to the population problem and looking at Washington as a political machine. Here the President had made his announcement, everybody knew where he was coming from. He was not in favor of the United States pushing birth control—certainly coercive birth control methods. Here you had AID not really responding to this and you represented

the President's position. Were you able to tap into the White House? Often there is a way of getting things from the Chief of Staff at the White House or some other way to get the government apparatus on the right track.

RUDDY: No. At least, none I knew of. Remember: I wasn't a movement Conservative. I was a lawyer who happened to be Conservative. I didn't belong to the old boy Conservative network. I had friends in some important positions, and they knew what was going on. There probably was a much more effective way than I used for getting The White House's attention, but I didn't want to be seen as a whiner. I thought of myself as manning an outpost in enemy territory and having to look out for myself. To get back to your question, clearly, the President's position was very clearly against abortion and those kinds of coercive birth control methods. For example, in the 1984 Mexico City conference on population, Senator Buckley headed the U.S. delegation which took, I thought, a very moderate position: that population by itself was not a crucial economic problem for the world. Population could be good for the economy; it could be bad, but it was not the key problem. You would have thought that he was urging some wild new flat earth policy, and, of course, there was a lot of sniping, a lot of leaking meant to embarrass Senator Buckley within the Administration where the population lobby had a strong fifth column. And that's completely understandable. Apart from the ideologues who see themselves appointed to instruct humanity in what's best for it, a great many people are getting a lot of money to carry out population programs. If someone comes along and says: “there is no population crisis,” their golden goose may stop producing. It also goes across party lines. You have the population controllers within the Republican Party—Rockefeller, as I mentioned, is a big supporter of this, as is Senator Simpson of Wyoming, Senator Goldwater, and others.

So, to get back to your question, no, it isn't just getting to the right person and everything is hunky-dory. It is a continuing controversy now, as much today as it was then. There were people in the White House who knew exactly what the situation in USAID was; that

was why I was put there. Eventually, after a lot of in fighting, guerrilla warfare really within USAID, McPherson tried to get me out of there. I saw Senator Helms and ...

Q: Senator Helms represents the Republican conservative wing from North Carolina.

RUDDY: I told Senator Helms it was war over at USAID and asked him, “Can you get me out of here? I am getting killed over there. It is awful to go to work anymore.” He said, “Well, Frank, we know you are doing a great job over there. We would like to keep you there if we can.” So that meant that I had to stay; his answer meant there was really no place to go. If McPherson had his way I would have been on the street. On the day he actually tried to fire me, I was sitting in Jack Kemp's office. “Don't do it,” Jack told McPherson on the phone, and McPherson backed off.

Shortly thereafter (in 1983) I became an Assistant Administrator without portfolio. They couldn't fire me because the White House wouldn't let them, but they could reassign me. For about a year I was watching the cars come in and out of the 23rd street entrance to The State Department. It was a battle I lost, but I didn't give in; I didn't resign. They offered me all kinds of do-nothing jobs, teaching at the War College was their favorite, but I wasn't buying. I said that if I were guilty of doing something wrong they should fire me. As a matter of fact, I said if they could show me I had done something wrong, I would resign. McPherson and company did nothing because they had no case. The White House certainly was aware of what was going on, and their failure to support McPherson meant they didn't believe him.

Q: But this was a battle that you were not going to fight?

RUDDY: It was a battle I was fighting vigorously, but not publicly and not in the newspapers. There was a fellow in the Peace Corps at that time...he was the Deputy Director and he had a lot of problems with Loret Ruppe, the Peace Corps Director, not on the same issues that separated McPherson and me, but on liberal/conservative issues. He went public, told his story in the newspapers, and although he got his story out, he

basically got nowhere politically. I didn't go public, but I did make sure the White House knew what was going on. There was a good deal of White House interest in my case, and I had lots of visitors wanting to know what was going on.

After about a year in USAID limbo, I was offered an Embassy in Africa.

Q: Before we move to your Ambassadorial assignment, in my interviews I get, I won't even say a mixed impression, but at least a tendency to cast down upon our efforts particularly in Africa on our AID programs. There seems to be almost the idea that many of our endeavors, either there is no follow through or else they are not too well conceived. At least the results are very problematical. Have we made a positive difference?

RUDDY: Absolutely, and unfortunately, not. Things are definitely worse in Africa, economically, after 30 years of foreign aid. USAID meant well, but overall, they have probably exacerbated Africa's problems.

Q: I am talking over a long period, not just that one time.

RUDDY: USAID offers jobs to people, many of whom couldn't get a job any place else, so it does some good, at least domestically. But in terms of making a difference in Africa, absolutely not. We had spent fortunes on aid to Africa, and the figures and results, or non results, speak for themselves. Western aid to Africa over the past 30 years has totaled somewhere around $30 Billion, and as enormous as that aid has been, Africa is more impoverished now than it was 30 years ago. The result of our aid has not only been zero, it has been a minus. Like President Johnson's failed Great Society Program, US foreign aid in Africa has created dependencies and discouraged initiative and private enterprise. We have supported, kept afloat, African governments that should have been made to pay the piper long ago. Sadly, despite the good intentions, foreign aid just hasn't been a good thing. It has been government to government in Africa. We put a lot of money into Africa, and it went to supporting African dictators' villas in Geneva and other parts of Europe. Lord

Bauer called foreign aid the poor people in wealthy countries paying money to the wealthy people of poor countries. From my experience, he had it about right.

In Equatorial Guinea, to mention a particular country that I am quite familiar with, they get $30 million a year in foreign aid for a country about the size of Maryland with a population of 300,000. That is more aid per capita than almost any country in the world except Israel and Egypt. I defy you to find any difference that enormous amount of aid has made in that country.

Q: Again from your vantage point at that time, were there any examples of any program that seemed to be justified and any sort of horror story where it seemed to be working the wrong way?

RUDDY: The best thing I can think of if you want horror stories is Blaine Hardin's book, Despatches From A Fragile Continent. Hardin was The Washington Post's man in Africa, so he doesn't come at the issue of foreign aid with anything like a Conservative point of view. He has a couple of tales of waste and abuse, like the one about the Turkana Dam in Kenya, which are absolutely true and point out more forcefully than anything I can think of, the arrogance and insouciance of aid bureaucrats to the sufferings they cause. The Shaba power line in Zaire is probably as great a waste of money as ever has been spent. It was/is a tremendously expensive power line extending over about 1,000 miles from one end of Zaire to the other, without providing power to any of the millions along the way. These are not isolated examples, simply dramatic instances of waste in a series of tremendously expensive and ineffective projects. Other projects that might be mentioned if you were creating a hall of fame of waste in foreign aid would be the cocoa projects in Ghana (the huge and costly cocoa silos were still standing, rusting and never used, the last time I was in Ghana. Then there was the brainstorm of turning Sudan into the breadbasket of Africa, an idea that not only didn't work, it devastated Sudan. In Tanzania the Scandinavians decided that what was needed were giant threshing machines to deal with all the harvests to be forthcoming as a result of Nyerere's economic enlightenment.

(You recall that this saintly gentleman forcibly removed 10's of thousands of Tanzanians to the countryside in his Ujamaa villages project. Of course, it was a disaster, and, as a result of Nyerere's thuggery, Tanzania ranked lower than South Africa on Freedom House's annual assessments of countries' tolerance of political and civil rights. His economic strategy came a cropper as well. He believed that there was as fixed amount of wealth in the world. If the West was wealthy and Africa poor, that meant the West had more than its share of the world's wealth. “You're rich because we're poor,” was a famous rallying cry of his, and you can understand why he was such a favorite of President Carter and Global 2000 types. He didn't understand that nations, like individuals, can create wealth, and therefore looked to the international community for handouts. The Scandinavian thresher program failed, of course, and the giant threshers of Tanzania, like the cocoa silos of Ghana, just rusted away.

These kinds of patronizing and subsidizing have two very damaging effects: one is what it keeps the people of achieving in a free economy where there are incentives for ingenuity and risk taking. The Africans are great entrepreneurs, the very active black markets throughout the continent demonstrate that, and if they were encouraged by their government, or at least not stifled by it, they would produce individual and national wealth. “A rising tide lifts all boats, great and small,” as JFK said, and it's true. It's also true that if you allow people to have economic power, you are allowing them political power, a reality not lost on African dictators.

A second damaging effect is the direct harm, literally making people worse off than they were before, of aid projects by created by World Bank or USAID “experts” who know better than the people they are supposed to help, what is best for them. Blaine Hardin, whom I mentioned, cites in his book, the Turkana Dam project in Kenya, and I can't improve on that one. The Turkana were a nomadic people getting along just fine in northern Kenya, or so they thought. The development experts came in from Washington or Geneva or wherever know-it-all bureaucrats come from, and told the Turkana that as nomads and herders they were not doing anything for the land or for themselves and that they, the

bureaucrats, had no choice but to change the Turkanas whole way of living. They told the Turkana they would turn them into fishermen and begin by creating for them a fish freezing facility, using fish from a nearby lake. What the experts didn't realize was that this same lake dried up regularly every so often. The freezer which cost $22-25 million to put up was in business for one week! Part of the lake had dried up, as could have been anticipated if the experts had asked, and the water which was available was too dirty to use. Ten years the experts, I don't remember if it was the same experts or new ones, came back and said: “Sorry. Our fish freezing idea was a bad one. What you ought to do raise cattle as you used to do.” By that time, of course they had no herds and were on relief. It is no mistake to say that foreign assistance and aid experts ruined these people. The Turkana were devastated, but the aid experts packed their Guccis and went home, to wait for another opportunity to enlighten some Third World country.

To get back a little earlier to what I said, Reagan's philosophy and my own is that people are probably the best judges of what is best for them. Of course, people can make mistakes or they can be taught to do what they are doing more efficiently. There is an institute of tropical agriculture in Ibadan, Nigeria, that exists to discover and disseminate better farming methods in Africa. That is all to the good, and I have visited the institute and applauded its work. Improvement is always possible, but you better have a care before you start telling other people, Africans, for example, how to live their lives. They probably are not only doing the best they can, they are probably, repeat probably, doing something that makes economic sense. We have in law something called a rebuttable presumption: a criminal is presumed innocent, but that presumption can be rebutted with hard evidence. I think the Turkana Dam fiasco argues petty persuasively for a rebuttable presumption in forcing aid down Africans' throats. They are entitled to a presumption that their old ways make sense unless an unimpeachable case can be made to the contrary. In this case the experts went home and the Turkana were devastated.

Turkana is one of the worse examples that I am familiar with, but there are a lot of Turkanas going on around Africa, lots of experts with the “we know what is best for these

people" view, a variation of 19th century colonial views of Africa and Africans. " Africans are incapable of helping themselves. Someone, we appoint ourselves, have to help them."

In yesterday's New York Times there was a review of Gertrude Himmelfarb's new book. Do you know her?

Q: No I don't.

RUDDY: She is an extraordinary writer. She is the wife of Irving Kristol. The statement that she uses for her second volume is from Lionel Trilling "...Some paradox of our natures lead us when once we have made our fellow man the objects of enlightened interest to go on to make them the objects of our pity then of our wisdom, ultimately of our coercion." There is a lot of truth in that.

Q: In AID then I take it you were in a way basically acting as a brake on doing things which in a bureaucracy is a kiss of death.

RUDDY: A brake on some projects I thought quite wasteful. A dynamo (what is the opposite of brake?), a force, a thrust for others that I found quite sensible.

Q: Because it wasn't just philosophy. Were you questioning programs at all?

RUDDY: Oh, absolutely. And also trying to change some of the ways USAID did business. Take, for example, something like language. I had had about eight years of French in school, including Cambridge where I had to read all the French philosophes in the original for my thesis. So my French was not bad to begin with, and I had kept it up over the years by taking classes at L'Alliance Francaise. No one would confuse me with a native Frenchman, but I wasn't bad. When I got to USAID and had to deal with all the Francophone countries, I went to FSI, the Foreign Service Institute, to get my French up to snuff. At FSI, you need to qualify as a 3 out of a possible 5 ("0" is a non-speaker and 5 is a native speaker) in speaking and reading to be certified as competent in that language.

Q: The working level of a language in both speaking and writing.

RUDDY: Right. I made the grade pretty quickly. As a matter of fact, I did a little better than that. I thought language competency was pretty important in the field and made it a requirement to be a mission director. I made the rule that nobody could go out as a mission director who could not achieve a 3- 3 in the language of his or her country, and in Africa, at that time, that meant French or Portuguese. I thought that was a rather modest standard and one professionals would be ashamed to contest. Well, I was wrong. There was a big to-do. You would have thought I had required people to take Ph.D. orals in chemistry or physics. I merely insisted that mission directors speak the principal language of the country they were working in. As well to be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, I also required that mission directors be re-tested every year to see how they were progressing in their language abilities. I happen to think all AID officers who have to work with foreign nationals should be able to communicate in the host country language and be tested regularly in that language. That sounds like common sense, but let me assure you, it's a radical idea. To return to the program I instituted, of all the people tested during the time I was there, one officer, count 'em: one, in Mali, I believe it was, improved. Nobody else had improved their language which, in most cases, was French, not some exotic language like Arabic. I thought those results were incredible, especially since, at that time when we were competing with the Russians...the Russians who are wonderful linguists. I don't know if you are shot if you are a Russian diplomat who's not fluent in the language of the country the send you to, but I do know the ones I met are terrific linguists.

Q: I think you get outside the country if you are a good linguist.

RUDDY: That may be, but whatever the incentive, the Russians I came across were good. For example, in the Francophone countries where I was, the Russians spoke French impeccably. In Equatorial Guinea they spoke Castillan Spanish. I could not speak as sweepingly of the language skills of our own people. As a matter of fact, I was frequently shocked by the language bumbling of some of our senior people. I was in Ouagadougou

one time visiting with our mission director. I forget if we just got back to his office or met there prior to setting out somewhere. Anyway, while I was waiting in his office, a group of officials from the Upper Volta government (the country is called Burkina Faso today) arrived ready for action. The poor mission director didn't have a clue why they were there. It turned out the mission director had attended a meeting the week before and agreed to sign a particular agreement. That's why the men from the ministries were there. However, the meeting the week before had been conducted in French, which the mission director didn't understand very well, and the mission director didn't know he had agreed to sign the document or that the signing was to take place on that particular day. That kind of language incompetence is not only embarrassing, it is wasteful. Sadly it did characterize USAID, and that day in Ouagadougou was one of the reasons I initiated my language testing programs.This is not to say that there are not some wonderful linguists in AID, there are. One who comes to mind was the Deputy Director in Senegal, Carol Tyson, actually Dr Carol Tyson, she had a Ph.D. from Harvard. Carol had a 4-4 in French, which is almost at a native speaker level. She also was fluent in Wolof, which is one of the indigenous languages of Senegal and The Gambia. And, of course, there were and are others besides Carol very accomplished in languages. But facility in foreign languages isn't a characteristic of AID. I remember the reaction of the FSI language teachers on learning that they would be teaching French to AID people. It was like that picture, The Cry, by Munch.

The absurd part of all this is that you can't do business if you can't speak the language, and we had a generation of AID officers who looked on language as a nuisance. “Let them speak English,” was their attitude. Insisting on language competency (after all I wasn't insisting they write poetry or op-ed pieces, just to be able to communicate and do business) was just a matter of basic management efficiency. To make the language pill easier to swallow, I experimented with some things. I had one fellow scheduled to go to Niger go a language school in Cannes or Nice, I forget which, and live with a family there while learning French at a local school. I thought getting out of FSI, not that FSI is the

problem, might work for some, and the Cannes experiment did work with that particular officer. Others were just plain lazy or incompetent. One affable fellow, one of the AID good old boys network, wanted to go to Togo as the mission director. Togo is French speaking. He had already had been tested at 2-2, so his stay at FSI should have been no more than a refresher and a little new material. FSI courses are designed for people to go from a 0-0 in a language like French to a 3-3 in 20 weeks. If you start at FSI with a 2-2, as this fellow did, you are already more than half way home. After 20 weeks at FSI this fellow never moved off 2-2. That's not easy to do. You almost have to resist learning not to move from a 2-2 after 20 weeks of classes and language labs. I told him he was not going. After I left AID, the whole language program was scrapped and his friends got this fellow his francophone posting after all. I guess he and the bureaucracy won, but why do people like this join AID and want to live overseas when they're too lazy to learn the language?

Sending people who couldn't speak the local language abroad was one of the many USAID inefficiencies. Another was keeping track of foreign aid dollars. I worked with the USAID Inspector General, Herb Beckington, to make sure that solid accounting standards and procedures were in place to keep track of monies distributed by USAID. The main cause with AID money disappearing in Africa, I think, was not theft; rather poor accounting procedures. USAID has probably the worst record of any federal agency when it comes to embezzlement and misuse of funds, so I'm not saying AID was lily white. My own successor, a few times removed, was sent to the slammer for fiddling with US Government funds, but in most of the cases we investigated involving unaccounted for project money, the consensus was (and I include the usual cynics, such as inspector general investigators in that consensus) that the money probably was spent on AID purposes, but the accounting systems were inadequate. Francophone countries would use a French accounting system, Anglophone countries an English one, Lusophone countries a Portuguese one, and we would use an American system. There was no shortage of problems as you can imagine. I worked with our financial people and the Inspector

General to standardize the different accounting systems so that US taxpayers' money could be accounted for.

Q: How did you become Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea?

RUDDY: I got a call from the White House, from John Herrington's office. John was then the head of White House personnel. He and other Californians like Bill Clarke, the Interior Secretary who had been the Deputy Secretary of State...they all knew what was going on over there. Anyway, I got a call from the White House asking if I would like to be the Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea? My first reaction was “Equatorial Guinea ! Oh no !” (I kept that reaction to myself, fortunately.) I knew Africa pretty well, but I didn't know where Equatorial Guinea was. I knew it was on the West coast somewhere, and I remembered from a meeting with Peter McPherson that I attended with their ambassador, it had a terrible reputation. I asked for some time to think it over, and I hoped I could use that time to get a better embassy. I went to two people: Frank Shakespeare and Bill Middendorf. Frank Shakespeare was back in town again as chairman of the Board of International Broadcasting. I asked him what I should do and he said I should take it. What I really wanted him to say was: “Frank, you don't have to take that embassy. Let me make a phone call, and we will get you some place a lot better.” He didn't say that. He just said, “Why don't you take it.” Then I went to Bill Middendorf, who was our Ambassador to the OAS at that time. I asked him the same question I asked Shakespeare, and I knew he would say he would take care of this for me and arrange for me to get a better posting. Wrong again. What he said was, and I remember this well: “Frank, sometimes the subway only stops once, you had better take it.”

So I called the White House back and spoke to Joe Salgado, a tough ex-cop from Oakland, who was really a very kind guy and his support was, I am sure, one of the reasons I got an embassy. I asked: “You know I speak French. Of all the countries in Africa, why are you sending me to the only one that speaks Spanish?” Joe said, “You mean they don't speak French there?”

Anyway, to make a long story short, Teri (my wife) and I talked it over and decided to go. When I told the children, David who was about 13 at that time, said, “Dad, you have made some dumb decisions in your life, but this is the worst.” That was about July. There were some funny incidents from then until we arrived in Malabo (the capital of Equatorial Guinea).

Since I didn't speak Spanish, I had to go to The Foreign Service Institute to learn. Teri was allowed to go too since she would have to be at home in Spanish to be effective in E.G. as well. FSI was a one of the great experiences of our lives. For 20 weeks you study Spanish full time: classes 9-3 and first class language labs after that. If you're a State employee, you get paid to do yourself a tremendous favor: learning the second most spoken language in the world (I'm not including Chinese). In Teri's case, she wasn't paid, but she got to attend a 20- week Spanish language course that would probably cost $20 or 25 thousand dollars if Berlitz offered it. It was like going back to university, and we both loved it. We even hired one of the FSI teachers to do a little moonlighting and teach our sons David and Stephen a little Spanish.

One of the things that happens while you are awaiting Senate confirmation as an ambassador is that the President himself calls you on the telephone and asks you to be his ambassador, in my case to Equatorial Guinea. It's all pro forma, but it is still done. It is one of the special things about being an ambassador that the President takes time out of his daily crises to play the game. He had to ask “Frank, I was wondering if you would be my Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea.” And I had to say, “Of course.” Well, on the appointed day I was at FSI, so The White House called FSI and said The President of The United States would like to talk to me. The FSI bureaucrat answering the phone told The White House operator that they were too busy to find me for the President. For the President ! I found a note, one of those “while you were out” yellow telephone slips on the students bulletin board. “To Frank Ruddy. You were called by The President of the United States.” The “please return call” box was checked. I returned the President's call on a pay

phone on the first floor. Returning the President's call would be personal, the FSI lady, probably the same one who was too busy to bother with the President's call, told me, so I couldn't use the FSI phone.

Another interesting call came the day before I was sworn in...I can't remember the exact date so let's say October 24...(1984) from Jim Lucier of Senator Helms' staff, asking if I would support an ad to run in the country's major newspapers endorsing the Senator. (My name was to be one of 20 or more U.S. ambassadors supporting Jesse.) Senator Helms was in a tough race that year, and the purpose of the ad was to show that a large number of U.S. ambassadors supported him, and by implication, his views on U.S. foreign policy. As political appointees we were not covered by the Hatch Act and could legally endorse a candidate without violating any law. I said I would be happy to go on record supporting the Senator for two very simple reasons: I agreed with him on most things, and, on a personal level, when I needed his help in my battles with McPherson, Helms had been there. He didn't hesitate or give me any of “on the one hand...” business. He just delivered. So when he needed my help I said, “Absolutely.” The ad ran in all the major papers, at least all the major east coast papers. The ad itself and the participation of U.S. ambassadors in it were roundly criticized by the usual suspects, The New York Times and The Washington Post, and surprisingly by The Washington Times, a conservative paper. It turned out that Bill Cheshire, a deputy editor of The Washington Times had played a major role in Helms' '78 campaign, but had had a falling out with Jesse. The Washington Times criticism of the Helms ad was payback time. After all I had been through in the previous 4 years, the flap over the Helms ad was small potatoes. I even thought of it as a badge of honor. I was pleased. There were about 23 of us ambassadorial types, I think, who signed the ad. I liked Helms then and I like him now. He is a decent man who has been terribly maligned. I think there are few in Washington strong enough to stand up to the abuse he has taken. With all the jokes about members of Congress who will take any position to be re-elected, Helms stands out among U.S. senators like the Rock of Gibraltar.

One twist in the ad was that it appeared the day that I was sworn in as ambassador. Of course, The Secretary of State, George Shultz, had apoplexy when he heard about it. Did you know Nancy Rawls?

Q: I knew her name.

RUDDY: Nancy had been ambassador to several African countries, and I knew her when she was ambassador to The Ivory Coast. Nancy was a good friend who had very nice things to say about me when I was at AID. She telephoned me at one point after the ad ran and said, “How could you do that? That was so, so... unprofessional.” I said to her just what I said to you: the Senator was a friend to me when I needed a friend, and I would do it again tomorrow. There is a marker system in political Washington. When someone does you a big favor, he has your marker. When the tide turns and that person comes to collect your marker, you had better deliver. I thought everyone in Washington knew that, so it seemed odd to be roundly criticized for doing what I thought was a perfectly understandable act, supporting a friend, and it hit all the big papers in the country. I suppose there is another tradition in Washington, in the press, at least, which might be called the Captain Renault syndrome. You remember Captain Renault from the movie Casablanca. He's the one who exclaimed he was “shocked; shocked, to learn gambling was going on...” in Rick's place, and then accepts his night's gambling take from one of the croupier's. I supposed The Washington Post and other papers have to exclaim to be “shocked” when publicly forced to acknowledge what they and everybody else knows goes on every day.

Q: What sort of preparation did you get before going out?

RUDDY: Not a great deal of formal preparation. FSI had a course in area studies which explains the politics, economics, in short, everything you ever wanted to know, about the area you are going to. In didn't work in our case for two reasons: first, the area studies for Africa were scheduled when I had be in Spanish class (African area studies were worked

around Portuguese and French language lessons.) Secondly, and I'll get into this later, because nobody knew anything, really: nada, zip, nothing, about Equatorial Guinea. There was something we called ambassador prep, a three day seminar for ambassadors going out for the first time. It was a program run by Shirley Temple Black and David Newsom. It was a worthwhile program, and Shirley Temple Black was excellent. She had been an ambassador herself in Ghana, and, of course, she had a lot of presence and charm as you know if you have ever, and you must have done, seen her in the movies. A lovely person and very effective. If you could translate the enthusiasm and professionalism she exudes, and tries to instill, into out-going ambassadors, every U.S. ambassador would be a great one. Newsom was your basic 7th floor, State Department guy. He looked like a house detective in one of The Marx Brothers movies and was about as exciting. I suppose he was good at something, or had been, but his picture appeared under boring in the dictionary. The three days at ambassador prep covered basic things; some I knew and some I didn't. Little tricks of the trade, like good techniques for getting your cables around State without appearing as a prima donna, keeping track of embassy silverware (Various committees in Congress went ballistic over silverware issues) and making sure embassy financial records are squeaky clean made relations with Washington and life at the embassy a lot more pleasant. Covering these kinds of things was helpful, but by and large, I don't think it would have been a catastrophe if I missed it.

Q: Today it is a longer one, two weeks, and there is a lot more on management, fraud and problems like that.

RUDDY: That makes sense. There are two kinds of ambassadors in a program like that: someone like me and someone who was going to be a figurehead at a large post, where the day-to-day management is handled by the foreign service resident staff. In my class that would be someone like Bob Stuart, a former C.E.O. for Quaker Oats, who was going to Oslo. There were career and non-career people, and the career people rarely got the figurehead posts. That's changing, I think, with President Bush. In any event, for those of us who actually had to sit down with the admin officer and go over the books before

the regional State Department fiscal officer arrived, like a bank examiner, to check up on us, that extra fraud, waste and abuse training would have been very useful. Fortunately for me, my main admin officer was a lawyer, and he and I pored over the regs to make sure everything was Kosher. We did the same with the procurement regs, security regs, etc. We taught ourselves everything, well, almost everything at the post. We could have profited from some help in those areas before we left. It sounds like they're doing that now, and if they are, it's a good thing. The other real gap we found at State, and if State didn't know, Shirley Temple surely didn't, was information about Equatorial Guinea. Nobody in Washington knew anything about Equatorial Guinea. We made it a point to cure that situation by sending loads of material on the country to State and to FSI so that our successors would know more than we did before leaving.

Q: I was going to ask if you were getting any support from the Desk?

RUDDY: They were very helpful, as helpful as they could be, but they just didn't know much. My predecessor in Equatorial Guinea, Alan Hardy, came home in the summer of 1984, and was retiring. We had lunch, and he told me a lunch worth's (we had lunch in the FDIC cafeteria across from State) about the country, and that was it. Then he was off to his retirement life, and I am sure the desk gave me whatever they had, but that wasn't much.

I was a lawyer at USIA in the 70's, and I remembered the weird cables coming in from Equatorial Guinea. It turned out there had been a murder there, but before we knew that, the cables from E.G. were like dispatches from The Twilight Zone: “Soviet troops marching through the streets,...the screams of victims being tortured by the E.G. Government are driving us mad,....” These were the kinds of details in the cables from E.G. What made them less unbelievable was the situation in E.G. The country's dictator, Francisco Macias, was a mass murderer, a poor man's Idi Amin. He called himself “The Divine Miracle” and massacred people in the capital's soccer stadium to the accompaniment of Beatles music. He once settled a Cabinet disagreement by hurling the dissenting minister out

a second floor window. Macias was certainly capable of the atrocities described in the cables, so desk officers and cable watchers suspended disbelief for a while. As the cables became more and more bizarre something had to be done. The Department sent over two officers from Cameroon, I think, Lannon Walker and another gentleman named Sherthoff or something similar. They finally gained entrance to the embassy in what appeared to be a scene scripted by Francis Ford Coppola and began a search for the communicator who was missing. The communicator's wife eventually found his body behind a locked door. The Charg# d'Affaires, Al Erdos, had killed him with a pair of those very long G.I. shears you find in every mail room. It was the result of a spat during a homosexual love affair as I later found out from Dr. Moran, the Spanish doctor who formed the autopsy (sperm in the deceased's stomach, that sort of thing.) That was about the sum total of what I knew about the country, and nobody I met at State knew any more. So when we went out it was really to terra incognita.

I arrived in Malabo, the capital of E.G., January 12, 1985. Teri (short for Kateri), my wife, came with our two youngest sons, David and Stephen, February 9. I went from a very freezing cold Madrid, where I had spent a week meeting the U.S. Embassy Madrid folks and waiting for the once a week flight to Malabo (there was no other way of getting there at the time), into this lush, tropical setting, right out of “Love in The Time of Cholera.” The capital city is Malabo, emphasis on the second “a,” a once magnificent city when E.G. was “the Switzerland of West Africa.” Maybe not Switzerland, but it was a slice of Europe, with hospitals, casinos, fine hotels, a place wealthy West Africans went to vacation, to gamble, or to get medical treatment, and Americans, like Peace Corps types, went for R & R. With independence in 1968, the country destroyed itself, or, more accurately, the first President, the infamous Francisco Macias, destroyed the country. Cocoa production virtually ceased, and with it foreign income, and E.G. which had the second highest literacy rate in black Africa (behind Uganda) at 87 % produced destroyed the school system and produced a generation (from 1968-79) of illiterates. The city of Malabo decayed visibly during Macias' years, and when he was overthrown (1979), a bankrupt

successor government was no more competent to restore the city than it was to revive the economy. A return to law and order and economic normalcy would have regenerated the country but attracting the necessary foreign and domestic investment, but that would also have diluted the government's power, and that was not an option the new dictator, who overthrew Francisco Macias, his nephew, Teodoro Obiang, was willing to consider. In any event, as you drive around the city and squint your eyes, you can see what the old Gothic cathedral, the Moorish building that serves as defense department, the Supreme Court building and 100 other magnificent structures must have looked like in their prime.

Since 1980 when diplomatic relations between the U.S. and E.G. were established again, the Embassy had been a set of rooms on the fifth floor of a seedy (but the only) hotel in Malabo. My predecessor Alan Hardy would have done a fine job if he only succeeded in keeping his sanity operating out of an office Sam Spade would have turned down, but, in fact, he did a great deal more. He got us started there, toured the country, got to know the government and its officials. He got hit with a very unflattering portrait in a story on E.G. in the London Sunday Times, but that was a result of his seedy, unairconditioned office, over which he had no control and which by Malabo standards was Trump Plaza, rather than his accomplishments. I still remember the articles reference to the fly-stained portrait of President Reagan hanging behind Ambassador Hardy. The irony was just as a real embassy was being completed (Hardy had negotiated for two adjoining houses for the embassy and ambassador's residence respectively, it was time for him to leave. He did get to move into the office, but he never had the comforts of the new residence which he had acquired and modeled to his specifications. Running the embassy when we got there was a young officer who was on his first tour as an officer, and he was probably the Department's youngest Charg# d'affaires. He had been in E.G. for a long time, and they were beginning to get a little worried about him at State. His cables were showing signs of strain (he had advised Washington that he was considering a major confrontation with the Spanish ambassador over some minor parking matter), and they thought, correctly in my opinion, he needed his long deferred R & R. He got it when I arrived.

In the very first month that I was there I got quite an education in the relationship between E.G. and Nigeria. Strange as it seems today, there was a time when E.G., or Fernando Po as the main island used to be known, was much more important than Nigeria. Nigerian workers used to come over to E.G. to work the cocoa plantations, as many as 75,000 Nigerian workers at times. This led, understandably, to tensions between the residents of the main island of E.G. who simply rented out their lands to the cocoa developers and the Nigerians who actually worked the land. As Nigeria became more powerful, this historical dependency became an embarrassment, and the Nigerians starting talking about Nigerian “slaves” brought over to harvest cocoa in E.G. Nigerian-Equatorial Guinea animosity had simmered for generations, and I was about to see it erupt again. A Nigerian cocoa worker was shot by a Equatorial Guinean policeman in a bar in a slum called “Campo Yaounde” on Saturday night. (It's hard to visualize a slum in a city (Malabo) which has itself become a large slum, but everything is relative.) The shooting wasn't a political act or a statement by the government of E.G. A policeman got drunk and shot someone who annoyed him. Did the policeman decide to shoot the fellow because he was a Nigerian? Maybe. Who knows. In any event, the important point is that the government of E.G. had nothing to do with it. To get buried, as well as to do anything, in Equatorial Guinea, you need a permit. Since the deceased was a Nigerian, the Nigerian charg# went through the regular process to get the burial permit, but he didn't succeed which is not surprising because the bureaucracy there doesn't do anything well or efficiently, even when it concerns disposing of a body which is putrefying in the equatorial sun. So he then went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to get their help but still no luck. Now remember: The Nigerian was shot on Saturday night at 10:00. It is very hot in E.G. There is no electricity and no way of refrigerating or preserving dead bodies. The Nigerian Charg# d'Affaires had tried unsuccessfully for over 40 hours to get his countryman buried. On Monday afternoon, the charge arrives at the Foreign Ministry at 3, just as it is closing for the day. He has the dead body angled in the back seat of his Mercedes. He catches the Foreign Minister as he is coming out and says: “I have the body here. You won't give me a permit to bury it, perhaps

that is because you would like to eat it." He got the burial permit, as he gloated to me over lunch one day.

Q: This is known as diplomacy ?

RUDDY: Hardly. It was not only a bizarre incident in its own terms, it was even worse if you knew the local history. There is a certain amount of cannibalism, in the country, necrophilia really, even to this day. When Francisco Macias was overthrown, the story was that he was executed and the executioner, including the current president, had a picnic on various of his body parts (brain, heart, etc.). American Indians used to do this same sort of thing to incorporate, literally, the best qualities of their enemies. Whether this ever happened in the case of Macias is not the point. The charge's was reminding the Foreign Minister of the reputation for necrophilia just to give an extra twist. That little story gives you an idea of the relations between the two countries. As I mentioned, the charge got his certificate, but the following Saturday two gun Nigerian gunboats arrived in the port of Malabo along with a giant transport; two Hercules aircraft (the kind they carry tanks and troops in) arrived at the airport, all without permission. Sunday morning Nigerian soldiers and sailors scoured the cocoa plantations and Nigerian living areas to find and repatriate all the "Nigerian slaves." (That's what the giant transport was for.) Agence France reported that Nigeria had sent an armada against E.G. and BBC World Service reported it as dramatically. The Guineans, for once used good sense and treated the planes, boats and Nigerian search parties as a non-event. There was nothing they could do about, so they ignored it on the state controlled radio and TV. The gun boats left within hours of their arrival since the Nigerian commander who was in charge of the search parties must have realized very quickly he was on a wild goose chase: the Nigerians he met were very happy to stay where they were. Many were married and had families. The ship stayed but nobody wanted to go except for 7 people who wanted a free ride back to Lagos.

We had no radio (I'm so used to saying it that I forget that it must sound like a fluke or temporary abnormality for a U.S. embassy not to have a radio when, as a matter of

fact, it was routine for us to be totally isolated), so while the BBC and Agence France were describing what sounded like Nigeria's answer to D-Day, we weren't saying boo. Washington, which is used to dealing with embassies with new-fangled inventions like radios, never considered the possibility that we just could not communicate. They interpreted our silence ominously. We were finally able to make a telephone call and alert the station chief that there was nothing to worry about. That put our mind at ease, but Gimbel's doesn't talk to Macy's, and our little chat did not get into State Department channels. While we went whistling about our business, fat and happy, thinking all was well with the world, the State Department truly believed we were under siege and unable even to communicate. That sort of confusion that was always going on when, as usual, we didn't have any communications. We came to realize, of course, that being out of touch with Washington was not necessarily such a bad thing.

Q: Why didn't you have communications? I would have thought that would have been a number one priority.

RUDDY: As of the time I left Malabo (February, 1988), the embassy still didn't have reliable communications. We had an old system which wasn't very effective even when well it was working well, which was rare. And we didn't have any reliable international telephone. Every once in a while, we did get a call through, but you just couldn't rely on it. The telephone hours would be erratic, and even when the phone was supposed to be working, it wouldn't. We went for months without reliable communications, and sometimes without any communications at all, except for what couriers would bring. Typically, we would have to communicate routine matters with Douala (in Cameroon) by radio. Classified material had to go out from Douala or be carried to us from Douala. It was not a good way to run a railroad. For other things, like mail, we depended on Iberia, the Spanish airline, which carried the diplomatic pouch, including letters from home, from Madrid to us. Iberia was always in a snit with Equatorial Guinea, and when things got nasty, as they frequently did, Iberia just suspended flights to E.G. At one stage we went just about 4 months without any mail. That meant no American Express bills, no Visa/

MasterCard bills, and when mail finally resumed there were some very nasty dunning letters.

Q: This all harks back to the 19th century consular posts.

RUDDY: It really does. It was almost like being an embassy in the days of the clipper ships. It was hard to deal with people like American Express because even their notices telling you that you didn't pay their last bill didn't get there either. And there was not much you could do about it. You could send out your bills, or whatever it was that came up and on other things you had to hope you could find someone, a missionary, a Peace Corps volunteer, somebody going to the States who could mail your letters there. Otherwise, you were on Mars. You couldn't call, you couldn't be called. For long periods, you couldn't send mail out; you couldn't get mail in. You couldn't get messages in; you couldn't send work messages out.

But, there was a good side. It meant we had to, repeat had to, send somebody to Douala regularly on courier trips. That was the only way we had to get and send important (classified) materials, and that being the case, State (as opposed to the embassy) paid for these trips. Frequently we could only go by charter because the national (E.G.) airline flights, such as they were, were inconsistent and sometimes non-existent because they didn't pay their fuel bills. Even Cameroon Airlines required payment from E.G. up front before they would allow any passengers to board. On other occasions, where we had a great many things to take to or from Douala (copiers, motors, booze and goodies for a major reception like the 4th) a charter was actually a better buy. So we used to get a charter every other week or so to take the mail out and bring back goods from Douala, which is about 20 miles away across the channel, and a big city. We rotated it among the Americans at post so that everybody would get a turn and have something to look forward to. I know Teri and I didn't take our full turns. I had no particular interest in going to Douala; I much preferred Malabo. But for others, though, it was just a nice break. They would go over, stay at Novotel or Le Meridien, have a few tasty French meals, swim in the topless

pools, do some shopping and return refreshed. It was a therapeutic break, and everyone knew when his turn was coming up. The anticipation might have been greater than the event, but it was very good for morale.

Q: Morale must have been a major concern of yours.

RUDDY: Yes, it was, but all things considered, we had surprisingly good morale. In addition to the Douala trips, the embassy rented a house in a mountainous region of the country, about an hour and a half away by car. It was called the ambassador's guesthouse, but I guess we used it less than anyone. The house was in a Swiss-like area (here the comparison with Switzerland was appropriate) or in an area like the mountainous regions of Burundi, above Bujumbura. This part of Equatorial Guinea, called Moka (no relation to coffee), is high, is pastoral and cool. You actually need a blanket at night. We would rotate the house among the embassy staff (American), so that every fourth week or so you knew you had use of the house. The only exception would be if I needed it for some official entertaining, and I did only once. The sea level part of Equatorial Guinea is great for mosquitoes and tsetse flies, malaria and sleeping sickness. Cattle can't survive there (sleeping sickness). But up in the higher regions you are in Marlboro country. Fresh air, great areas for hiking, reading, and some serious sleeping. Moka was a another very good thing for morale.

One of the demoralizing sides of E.G. for some, i.e. those who didn't speak it, was language. Spanish is the official language, but if you didn't speak Spanish, you could get by in French. There were enough people in Malabo from the continent (E.G. is in two parts: one part is an island (former Fernando Po), and the other part is a pie slice between Gabon and Cameroon) that a foreigner (American) could get by in French. Foreign Service officers did not have a problem since they could all speak Spanish. Secretaries, communicators, the non-coms, as it were were the ones who had language problems, and therefore, by definition if they were young and single, problems with their social lives. I'll get back to that in a minute.

A real fear, and therefore a morale problem, for parents, was for the health of young children. One of the officers and his wife had a small child at post, and there was always the fear of illness, exacerbated because there was no real hospital. There was a hospital, of course, but it would make you gag walking around the grounds to smell the medical garbage and trash just thrown behind the buildings. The U.S. Navy doctor who came to E.G. on a ship visit visited the hospital and said that we would never be so sick to go to that hospital, no matter what we had. They treated patients with contagious diseases in the bed next to someone there for some internal problem. Patients brought their own food; there was no electricity, therefore: no x-rays, no refrigeration, no medicines requiring cooling, no whole blood supply. Another fear was trauma? What do you do if you or your wife or child is in a motor accident, for example, bleeding, internal injuries, if you could do anything? It was not an academic question. During my stay in E.G. several ex-pats (a few Europeans and a South African woman) died in different parts of the country as a result of car crashes. In Malabo, at least, we, in the embassies had an agreement among ourselves, to help each other in several ways. First, we listed those diplomats who could be called on to give blood, on the hoof, as it were. (It was the honor system; don't volunteer unless you're sure your blood is untainted.) We arranged to have a plane from Douala, to come out when signaled, land at in Malabo, at night if necessary, without airport lights (the various embassies' cars would go out and provide runway lights...this was right out of a movie) and medevac the injured person. Fortunately we never had to use that.

We did have direct cable traffic with Europe through the Spanish Embassy and their Foreign Ministry in Madrid. The Foreign Ministry could inform our embassy in Madrid and arrange whatever kind of medical help the USG could provide us. We could at least get the word out that way. There was a real medical risk, no doubt about it. That's why E.G. was a hardship post, why everybody got paid about 25% more to go there.

Language was also a great a problem. One of big mistakes State made, and probably still does, was to send communicators and secretaries out to post without any language

training. The rationale, I guess, is that they don't need a foreign language to do their job in the embassy, so why bother? The reason to bother is that 16 hours of each day are spent out of the embassy, and if they can't relax by shopping locally, dining out, having a drink, dancing, doing the things people need language to do, they are going to become unhappy and depressed. In some cases the non-coms, as I called them, would try to learn Spanish. We offered language classes free, had native speakers come in, provided books and tapes and did what we could. (I took Spanish all the time we were there, because you can never be good enough.) But we always started classes for anybody who wanted it....basic, “market” Spanish to let people mingle in town, order a drink, be a little less self-conscious. But they weren't interested. They would try for a while and then drop off. I couldn't understand that, especially since, without Spanish, they knew they were too embarrassed to do simple things like go shopping. They couldn't go to the bars and do the social things that they liked doing. Nobody expects you to have perfect Spanish (the Guineans are so nice about helping you along if you have any Spanish at all), but without any Spanish you are playing charades.

The married people were in better shape. For example, there was a communicator and his wife, neither of whom spoke Spanish, but they were married and had each other, and that solved a lot of the language problem. If you didn't have someone to unburden to in English, it seemed to me you had a problem. But we had (to my knowledge) no drinking problems,no drug problems, the kinds of problems you would expect in so isolated a place.

We did have some unhappy people, no question about that. I don't know how State solves that, but if everybody, especially the non-coms, were given language training, it would open up new worlds for them. One secretary, a lovely young woman really tried to learn Spanish on her own but just didn't have much success, although she was extraverted and gave it the college try. As a result of being unable to speak Spanish, she asked to leave post early and, of course, I said all right because she really had tried. But if she had had a

couple of months of Spanish before she came out it would have made things a lot easier and State would have had a trained secretary in place for a much longer period.

Q: Since Equatorial Guinea is a place that really does not show up on the normal radar, could you explain a little about it background?

RUDDY: Actually it is fairly well known among Africanists, but by the name Fernando Po, the Main island. The Portuguese discovered, or in political-correctese, encountered Fernando Po (Po rhymes with goo) in the 15th century. Many people had sailed down the West coast of Africa, but few made it back. They didn't have the technology to do so. The Portuguese developed the corsair, the height of naval technology in those days, a technological equivalent in its time to the nuclear subs we have developed which can sail around the world under water. The corsairs, with their special sails and Portuguese knowledge of the winds and tides, allowed them to get down the coast of Africa and back again. That is how they were able to get around the Cape of Good Hope, an achievement for those days equivalent to our moon landing.

The Portuguese were the astronauts of the 15th century, and they explored everywhere, including Africa. That is why so many places like Sierra Leone and Cabo Verde have Portuguese names (Papua New Guinea in the Pacific was so called because the native hair pieces reminded the Portuguese of a papal tiara). Mozambique, Angola, Guinea Bissau were Portuguese colonies (they even landed on The East Cape of Good Hope but used it only for a fueling and R & R station; they didn't think it worth colonizing!), and in their voyages they landed on the island known until 1968 or so as Fernando Po. (No, I don't know who the eponymous Fernando Po was.)

There is a humorous story I tell on myself. The capital of Mozambique in the late 60's when I got to USIA was Louren#o Marques, named I guess, in Portuguese fashion after some famous Portuguese. All the African cables I saw on arriving at USIA had the notation: “Copy Lourenco Marques.” I didn't know it was a place. I pictured some old

colonial planter in a white suit, the kind of person Fernando Lamas played in SOUTH PACIFIC, grown old but still very knowledgeable about East Africa. I assumed he was on our payroll and the “copy Lourenco Marques” was to keep him informed. Dumb? Yes, very.

Anyway, there was a trade made between Spain and Portugal in the 18th century. Spain ceded Portugal some islands off Brazil, and Spain was given Fernando Po in West Africa. Thus, in a nutshell, is how Fernando Po became Spanish. It gained independence in 1968, but it had exercised autonomy for some time before and had its own representatives in the Spanish Cortes.

The first President was Francisco Macias, and his accession to power was the result of a power struggle in the UN Poland, of all countries, was influential in gathering support around him. He was not Spain's first choice by any means, but in one of the great underestimates of all time, they went along with him as someone who couldn't do any harm. It is the vogue to say he was a madman. I think he was just a very bad and very stupid man. He gave himself the title of “Divine Miracle”, and woe to anyone who snickered on hearing it. He took Equatorial Guinea which had the third highest per capita income in Africa, after Libya and South Africa, right over a cliff. He destroyed the economy. E.G. had the best cocoa in the world, and he destroyed its production and export. He made it a crime to be an “intellectual,” the corpus delicti sufficing in owning a single book. He drove out priests and nuns, and many others fled for their lives. The schools, which the nuns had run with such great success, closed, and for a decade young Guineans had no schooling whatsoever. He also murdered many people, leading anyone with a brain and means to escape to flee. If someone drew up a plan to destroy a country, he could not have improved on what Macias actually did. When he was finally convicted... they had a trial for him of sorts...they named 4500 people that he was responsible for killing, some as I mentioned, executed in the national soccer stadium to the accompaniment of Beatles music.

Q: We are talking about a population of how many?

RUDDY: The current population is roughly 300,000. That's probably a good working figure. You know that records don't mean much in a country where many births and deaths are not recorded. Add to that the great numbers that fled, obviously without getting their passports stamped. There is no really accurate number of those killed or driven out by Macias, but the number I heard frequently was 100,000 or a third of the population. Those who could flee went to Gabon, to Cameroon, to The Canaries or to Spain itself, and probably other places as well, such as Nigeria, but how many is just guess work.

Those who were able to escape formed Guinean exile associations in the countries in which they settled. I have seen the minutes of some of these groups. They were, of course, all against the government of E.G. (you have to wait in line to do that), but they reminded me of the Young Republicans: they spent all their time trying to purge each other, half the group accusing the other half of disloyalty, intrigue, etc. It didn't matter where the group was, The Canaries, Paris, Gabon, the minutes always read alike.

Their plight, of course, was anything but humorous. Families were separated forever, many Guinean women became prostitutes to support themselves in places like Libreville (the red light district there is largely Guinean), and all because of Francisco Macias, who had done just terrible things, abominable things, an Idi Amin without the publicity. Many people think he had to be demented. I think he was just a bad person. He admired Hitler whom he used to quote in his speeches. He used bhong, rhymes with gong, a kind of marijuana which he smoked all the time. “The Dogs of War” if you have ever read that book is about Equatorial Guinea.

Q: John Forsythe?

RUDDY: Fredrick Forsyth, I think. John is the actor. That book was not only about E.G., it was written in Equatorial Guinea. If you want to know what the city looked like that book will tell you. The description is just wonderful. Forsyth was in E.G. during the Macias period, and the book is about a fictional attempt to overthrow him. Forsyth, himself, did

fund an aborted attempt to overthrow Macias, but the Spanish Coast Guard intercepted the guns and mercenaries before they could get out of Spanish waters, and that was the end of that. There has been an recent book on E.G., and The New York Times rated it as one of the best books of 1990. Written by Bob Klitgaard, it's called “Tropical Gangsters” and treats Equatorial Guinea about the time when I was there. I knew Bob and actually reviewed the book for the Foreign Service Journal. The title tells it all: the tropical gangsters are the corrupt government officials (is that redundant ?) in E.G., a tropical nomenclature headed by the President himself, Teodoro Obiang, as gang leader.

Q: There is a coastal part too isn't there?

RUDDY: Yes, there is a pie slice really between Gabon and Cameroon which is also part of Equatorial Guinea. Then they have an island called Annobon on the other side of Sao Tome and Principe, at least 500 miles away from Fernando Po, and it too is a part of Equatorial Guinea. Again these possessions are all the result of trades, deals made centuries ago, by countries playing Monopoly with each other.

We actually went to Annobon one time by ship, the “national ship,” the Acacio Mane, a gift from the Chinese who got it as a war reparation from the Japanese. “ Getting there is half the fun” is Cunard's motto, and it could have been the Acacio Mane's as well. There are no scheduled departures. You just hear that it's sailing soon, and you buy a ticket and hope soon is within the next week or two. Like all the African ships I have been on, there were nice cabins, black hole of Calcutta cabins and deck space for people and their animals. Remember: these folks didn't have bank accounts; their animals were their wealth, and they carried them with them. Some on the deck slept on straw mats they brought; others slept in their cayucos or in any unoccupied convex form on deck. There were also convicts on the boat, en route to Annobon to spend a year or two, or at least until the boat came back, as prisoners. They weren't dangerous or violent. People in E.G. just are not violent. They probably stole some money or insulted some official, and they are on their way to Annobon, as carefree as the other passengers going to see family. Annobon isn't near

anywhere; Gabon and San Tome and Principe are too far away to reach by small boat, and no big boats ever come there. There is no place for them to go until the government ship comes and takes them back after a year or whatever period of time is involved. Since the population of Annobon is 9 to 1 women to men, all the husbands and sons having gone to Gabon or Malabo to find work, the prisoners may actually be looking forward to a Club Med experience.

All in all, the geography of E.G. is unusual. They have these little islands here and there. One of them is just off the coast of Gabon, and it is, or at least was, a hot potato because there is supposed to be a great deal of oil in the area...or at least some form of hydrocarbons, in the water off shore. When last I checked, Gabon and E.G. were disputing ownership of the oil rich island area. In addition to hydrocarbons, there are quite a few other natural resources, gold and wonderful timber, in E.G. It is potentially a rich country. They had a wonderful cocoa industry and could have again, with some foresight and sensible government policies. The cocoa plantations of E.G. used to produce the best cocoa in the world, and some think they still do, but they are producing at about 5 or 10 % of capacity. The cocoa trees would have to be cut back (many haven't been pruned or attended to in 25 years), they are still hardy I am told, and getting them back in production would certainly be do-able. The problem is that nobody wants to invest in the country because bribery is not just a moral issue it is an economic issue. The politicians of E.G. don't even meet the Chicago definition of government ethics: a politician who once bought, stays bought. Worse, the investors in E.G. don't even know whom to bribe. The country's system of graft is as screwed up as the rest of the country. I had a French businessman come in to see me one time and he said, “You know we paid off the Minister to bring in the Peugeots we were importing, and now I have to pay off the Customs guy as well. It never stops.” So no one is going to invest in a place where costs, not even the payoff schedule, is predictable.

Politically, and paradoxically, the government is stable. It may be that the people are just too worn out by the travails of the last twenty-odd years, by the memory of Macias' horrors

or just think that things, bad as they are, can never be as bad as the period before the coup, golpe de estado they say in Spanish, which overthrew Macias.

Q: When was this?

RUDDY: The coup happened in 1979. Macias' nephew, the one who overthrew him, is the current President, and probably a fairly decent man, despite some of the horror stories I've heard about him. He went to Zaragoza, which is the Spanish West Point. He got through, with caballero's C's, I guess you'd say in Spain. He is a very interesting person, a lot more complex and interesting than many of the politicians I've met in Washington. When I got to E.G. Teodoro Obiang, or Teodoro as he is called locally, spoke only Spanish and Fang. When I left he spoke French quite well. He had worked hard at it and succeeded. It made sense since to learn French since the French are moving into E.G. in a very big way. They are replacing the Spanish in all the key institutions. Teodoro was also trying to get a degree from Madrid (unlike President Doe of Liberia who was getting a sweetheart deal from a university in Monrovia, Teodoro is going after a real degree) and was working on that as well. He is a workaholic. Now that he has French he may switch to a French university since the Spanish system is incredibly bureaucratic and would probably love giving a head-of-state a hard time. He is a physical fitness...I won't say nut, but more than an enthusiast. He has a very pleasant way of dealing with people, and he is extraordinarily effective in dealing with large groups of Guineans, whether he be talking about monetary policy or keeping the garbage off the streets. He assumes a fatherly role and is firm without being brusque.

His faults as leader or dictator, because that's really what he is, are probably the same, although on a smaller scale, as his dictatorial brothers, Mobutu, Kaunda, Nyerere, Moi, Doe, et al. throughout Africa, but I have met almost all the famous African dictators, and I would give Teodoro higher than average marks on personal qualities like sensitivity, sympathy for the little man or, at least, acting as if he did. Teodoro has the reputation of running something called Black Beach, “Black Bich” in pidgin, a prison for Macias'

enemies, real or imagined, where, they say, Teodoro was in charge of torture and death. It was like the Castro prison Valadares describes in Beyond All Hope or Idi Amin's Psychiatric Institute. And yet, while it is possible to view Teodoro as a crook with his bank accounts in Paris and Madrid, it is very hard to meet with him, as I have many times, and believe he is a brutal or violent man, or one capable of authorizing or participating in the atrocities committed with “Black Bich.” I discussed this with a friend one time, an Agency fellow who had also met him. He had an interesting comment. He said: “ Suppose Obiang did all the things they say he did (and like me, my friend didn't know for sure whether he did) how would he be acting now if he truly repented all the evil things he had done?” Well, the answer to his question is that he would be acting exactly as he was acting. So, I guess I think that if he ever committed the crimes attributed to him, he has changed his ways.

There is no violence in the E.G. which is extraordinary to anyone familiar with West Africa. Lagos, an hour away by plane, is wild, and if you go across the Bight of Benin to Douala, 20 miles away, and it is like New York City. That bad! My son and I got mugged in Douala at 7 o'clock at night, in the main business district, to the amusement of passers-by. Mother Teresa would get mugged in Douala. It is just a very rough place.

Q: Douala is the capital of...?

RUDDY: Douala is Cameroon's main city, its New York, as opposed to Yaounde, its capital, its Albany. In contrast, in Malabo, if you can believe this, your wife, if she were a beauty queen, could walk down any street in any area of the city, in a bathing suit, at midnight and be perfectly safe. However, if she left her rosary beads in a church pew to go to confession, they would be stolen. Theft of every kind, was rampant, but there was no violence.

Q: That must have made it quite doable for the staff there.

RUDDY: Yes, and the peace of the place gave us a lot of peace of mind about the children. They could go wherever they wanted and explore, play with friends, ride their

bikes, go anywhere, and we didn't have to worry about them being robbed, beaten or straying into the wrong neighborhood. Malabo was a heck of a lot safer than D.C.

Two of our sons came over with us. The third would come a little later. One had just finished grammar school, and the other was about to go into seventh grade. We put them both in an African school in Malabo, the Instituto Rey Malabo (King Malabo was a famous Bubi leader). It was a good experience for them as far as making friends, learning Spanish and being accepted by the Guineans was concerned, but a complete waste of time in academic terms. The teachers called in sick (there were no phones, so they sent a message some way), and then came to school and played basketball and soccer in plain view of the administrators and students. Other times they just didn't show. The good thing was that David and Stephen learned a little Spanish at school. They played basketball, and I put up a basketball court in the Embassy so they could invite the local boys in to play. The Spanish Embassy opened up a grammar school in Malabo time for Stephen to do his 8th grade there (David had gone back to board at Georgetown Prep in Washington), but the next year they both went to school in Spain, to a high school called San Estanislao de Kostka, a school many educated Spanish sent their own children to, 20 K's outside Madrid on the road to El Escorial. They were the only two anglos there, so their Spanish is wonderful. They speak castellano castizo, as they say. When they were in Spain they would come back for vacations at Christmas and Easter, as did many diplomatic children. The nice thing was...you know the Spanish schedule is different, dinner at 10:00 and then off to the disco at midnight...there was never a worry about their safety. They would come home about 4 or 5 in the morning, routinely. If that happened in Washington, we would be pacing the halls, calling the emergency rooms, but in Malabo there was no worry. They could walk home if they had to (one end of the town to the other in any direction was under two miles), and I guess they usually did because they weren't driving at that time. But as I mentioned, Malabo was just much safer than Washington or New York City. Other people who had daughters and therefore might have been a little more cautious had the same experience. It was so nice that they could go out and didn't have to worry about them.

The Spanish Ambassador (and you know the Spanish tradition of duennas and extremely close scrutiny of daughters) was saying that in Madrid, if his daughter wasn't home by 2 he would be frantic; in Malabo, he was sound asleep when they came home at 3 or 4.

Q: What were American interests in Equatorial Guinea? When you went out were you told to do something in particular?

RUDDY: Probably the most important thing I could do was to keep the peace between the French and Spanish. The Spanish were the colonial power, but their prestige and influence in E.G. were waning. The French were shoving their way into Equatorial Guinea, and there was, understandably, no shortage of tension between the two countries. The United States opened the embassy in E.G. because President Carter had made some sort of commitment to King Juan Carlos that we would do something there, and that may have seemed at the time the best thing to do. It wasn't the result of some geo-politician like Henry Kissinger saying: “To keep the U.S. a world power, we've got to go into Equatorial Guinea.” I doubt even Kissinger knew where it was. No, our being there was purely a political favor to The King of Spain. Who knows, maybe Jimmy, who thought he knew Spanish, was really like that mission director in Ouagadougou. Maybe he agreed to something the King said in Spanish without knowing what he was agreeing to. In any event, we had broken off diplomatic relations during Macias' time, about a year, I think, after that murder, although not just because of the murder. It certainly made sense to restore diplomatic relations with the country after Macias was overthrown, but an embassy? State goes through these things regularly. For a while, diplomatic relations are handled regionally; then they decide on embassies everywhere. Then they decide they have to cut back. And on and on. That happened in E.G. They reopened the embassy, and 8 years later they were trying to close it again, this time for fiscal rather than policy reasons.

Q: What did you do?

RUDDY: A cynic would quote Parkinson and say work expands to the time allotted to it. In fact, there were quite a few things to do. We had an AID project for one thing. Since we did have an embassy there, things like dealing with the government on some key UN votes was a major responsibility. I will be immodest enough to say that during my stay E.G. went from the bottom to the top of African countries supporting the U.S. on key votes. There was also another semi-annual ritual: every six months we got a telegram from Vernon Walters, our Ambassador to the UN, saying that the Marshal in New York was about to evict the Equatorial Guinean embassy (embassy is the right word; E.G. was allowed to use its UN Mission as its embassy; embassies as you know are in capitals, and I never heard of this before.) E.G.'s embassy was in New York, and every 6 months Vernon Walters would ask us to ask the Foreign Minister to pay the rent. Walters could never call their embassy because their phone was cut off for non-payment more than it was on. So we would go to the Foreign Minister who was always shocked that this unseemly matter had arisen, especially as the check was in the mail, etc. It was a little game we both played. He was lying. I knew it. He knew I knew it. I knew he knew I knew it. We both pretended it was a horrible misunderstanding.

There was also a great deal of building going on; the embassy building itself was being completed and quarters were being renovated for the political officer's, the admin officer's and the communicator's house. Since we were a sho'nuf embassy, we got on State's mailing list of issues to discuss with the government of E.G. in order to get their support on everything from GATT issues to Law of the Sea questions. Most of these communiques were never acted on since only two people in the government would have the slightest idea what they were about, and I had to save these 2 for special favors on key issues. Where possible we did float informational papers on issues that we were interested in just to keep them more or less au fait with issues that might become hot. We did a fair amount of dealing with other embassies. We were very friendly with the Spanish. They were really a class act, extremely professional. They had to speak two languages well even to be considered for the diplomatic service. All whom we knew had lived in English and French

countries for a while, so it wasn't a question of just going to FSI. Their English and French were excellent. They usually went to places like Dublin. The Spanish Ambassador had gone to LSE (London School of Economic) for a while. He had also lived in Paris. The French had two ambassadors during my stay. The second one was extremely pleasant, mainly so, I think, because he had spent so little time in France. He was a pied noir, born and raised in Algeria. A very nice person and easy to get along with. He had a wonderful sense of humor, and his wife had filaria, as did the wife of the previous French ambassador who had no sense of humor. It proves, I think, that filaria is not contracted from a humorous spouse.

Different events broke the monotony. There was the 40th celebration of the end of World War II which came up in 1985. Boris, the Russian ambassador, invited me to celebrate May 8th, 1985 as part of a worldwide Russian celebration of their role in ending WWII. We were under instructions not to attend, as were the French. “But we were allies in World War II,” Boris protested when I said I couldn't go. “Which part would that be, Boris,” 41-45 or '39-41 when you were allies of the Nazis.” He was not amused. He said I was the rudest person in Malabo except for the French ambassador who was even ruder.

There were also be visits by the Fleet, usually our fleet, but sometimes the French fleet and sometimes the Nigerian fleet. (Sometimes they were invited!) There would be national days and special holidays, and all the embassies supported each other by going. The Government, however, only went to one national day per year at each embassy (that was their rule), so the idea was to find some other pretext to get them there. Ship visits usually worked, but the biggest success we had was Martin Luther King's birthday. I think we were the first embassy in Africa that did a major program on Martin Luther King. I personally wasn't in favor of his birthday being a national holiday, but I was outvoted. My job as an ambassador was to represent the United States, and if Martin Luther King's birthday was something our country had decided to celebrate, I thought the embassy should do it up right. It was amazing to me, and to all of us at the embassy, just how enthusiastically the Guineans responded to our honoring Martin Luther King. Usually Guineans come

to our celebrations for the food. Not so with Martin Luther King. He was a hero in Africa as well as in the U.S. We had a ceremony on Martin Luther King's birthday in 1988, just before we left, and dedicated a small building on the embassy grounds as the Martin Luther King's Reading Room. Even the Foreign Minister, trained in Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow (You know the Russians segregated the African students in Moscow! So much for the workers' brotherhood) was there and cut the tape to open the reading room formally. The irony, of course, is that many Guineans would still be afraid to be seen by government people entering the U.S. embassy, if only to use the MLK Reading Room. The Government of E.G. praised MLK because it was an opportunity for them to be seen on the side of the angels, in favor of equal justice, one man, one vote, democratic government, etc. The reality is that if Martin Luther King had tried any of his non-violent resistance in Equatorial Guinea, if, for example, he were to organize protests to oppose the discriminatory treatment of the Bubis by the ruling clique of Fangs in the government, he would have been in “Black Bich,” or among the missing, un desaparecido, in no time flat. They don't put up with much dissent, let alone civil disobedience, in E.G. as the Jehovah Witnesses and anybody who lived there soon found out.

Although Martin Luther King enjoys a kind of secular sainthood, I would dare to say, throughout Africa, there is no such uniformity among all Africans in their views of American blacks. The point was best made by recently by an American black. I wonder if you read in the Washington Post about two weeks ago...their man in Africa was writing about his experiences there; he is black and the successor to Blaine Hardin whom I mentioned earlier. He wrote, among other things, about the reactions of Africans to him. Some were very warm and happy to see him... “you are one of us,” they seemed to be saying. Others were very condescending. “You are not one of us.” He said the first time he had ever been called “nigger” was by a Kenyan policeman in Nairobi who looked down on American blacks. In the 20 years or so that I have been going to Africa, I have seen first hand both reactions by African towards black Americans, but I never observed any hostility

or superciliousness by Guineans towards American blacks. If anything there was a little unrealistic hero-worship of American blacks and their success.

An example, by no means atypical. USIA has VIP tours where up-and-comers from countries like E.G. spend a couple of weeks in the United States visiting cities and places of particular interest to them. Technical people might visit the Silicon Valley; finance types New York City, etc. USIA picks people who they think are going to be running the government in a few years. Well, one of these people, an economist and, I would have thought, a reasonably worldly young man who had done university work in Russia and Spain, had gone on one of these tours of the U.S. I was talking to him about his experiences and he said in all seriousness: “You know, I was over there, and I was just so impressed by how well all these black people are doing. In New York I saw this fellow who had a very big hat, and big fur coat and all these rings on, a huge Cadillac and some white girl friends.” What he saw, of course, was a pimp, but to the Guinean, this was just the American dream come true for a black man. If I asked my young Guinean friend what the gentleman he saw did for a living, he probably would have said he worked on Wall Street or worked in a big office somewhere.

By the time I left E.G. we had two big MLK celebrations, the second one being bigger than the first. I suggested to my successor, Chester Norris, that he really emphasize the Martin Luther King holiday. Guineans were so happy and proud that the U.S. was honoring a black man, Martin Luther King, that our celebration almost became their celebration. It was a natural for us, and all we had to do was bring people together to talk about Martin Luther King, and even that was no problem. Guineans knew as much about Martin Luther King as we did. In a panel discussion on television (E.G. didn't have a newspaper, but it did have a television station before most African countries) during our first celebration of the MLK birthday, panelist after panelist gave different details of MLK's life and various reasons why he (MLK) was a great man. It was like listening to soccer fans discuss Pele. They knew everything about him. One of the panelists was the Catholic Bishop of Malabo. Equatorial Guinea is 98 percent Catholic, at least nominally. One of the questions asked

the Bishop was, “Are you (i.e. The Church) going to canonize Martin Luther King?” The Bishop wasn't going to get into a discussion of the canonization process. I forget his answer, but it was diplomatic. The interesting thing to me was the question itself. It showed how the Guineans viewed MLK. He deserved to be canonized, whether he was or not. Being associated with MLK simply by representing the country he did so much to change was an enormous plus for us.

Q: You said part of your marching orders was to keep the French/Spanish dispute quiet. Did you get involved between them?

RUDDY: Oh, Yes, indeed. E.G. changed currency from the bipkuele, its own currency, to the West African Franc in 1985, a sign of things to come. The West African Franc, the CFA, pronounced say-fa, was pegged to the French Franc on a 1 to 50 ratio, and that spelled the beginning of the end of Spanish influence in E.G. Teodoro actually committed a pun in one of his speeches after the currency shift. The economy was worse than ever, and he referred to the “CFA, or as they say in pidgin “Sufa” (suffer). I guess you had to be there. The currency business didn't happen in a vacuum. There were always problems between Madrid and Equatorial Guinea on levels of aid, on Iberia (Iberia is a government run airline and shows it), on insults real or imagined towards one or another, and the French would capitalize on these frictions. One cartoon I saw in a Madrid paper portrayed Teodoro as a cannibal biting or eating the hand (Spain) that fed him. Vicious and racist as it was, it was not the Spanish government speaking but a newspaper. These distinctions were not necessarily made. There were some real racists among the Spanish: one of the rising young diplomats at their embassy referred to the Guineans continually as monkeys, “monos” in Spanish, and he meant it. In general, though the Spanish were not racist. They and the Guineans were like a family. There were lots of squabbles and finger pointing, but at bottom they liked each other, saw themselves as belonging to one another. The French, on the other hand, were, man for man, the most racist group I ever encountered in Africa.

Surprising, perhaps, because of their long experience in Africa, especially, West Africa, but they were there to use the Africans and for no other reason.

The French knew what they had to do to get control of a Third World country. They would get into ministries such as Finance, Transportation, Communications, and that is where they would put their experts with the aim of taking over everything. While the French and Spanish didn't openly quarrel about French maneuvering—the Spanish attitude was classic sour grapes: let them have the place; it will be a great relief to us not to be burdened with all the corruption—yet there really was a lot of animosity and hurt Spanish pride. I tried to keep on good terms with both the French and Spanish to stop things from getting out-of-hand. Spain was moving out and France was moving in. That seemed unavoidable. What I wanted to do was to avoid any real outbreaks of bitterness between Spain and France. Everybody knew the handwriting was on the wall.

Q: What about our AID mission? Here you had come from AID where you had sort of a jaundiced view and all of a sudden you had an AID project in your lap. How did you feel about that?

RUDDY: I had a jaundiced view of aid in general, but not of every aid project. The one that we had there was first rate. It was run out of Yaounde by what was called a PVO, a private voluntary organization called The Cooperative League of the United States or CLUSA for short. CLUSA was into cooperatives, not in the Chinese sense, but in the Land-o-Lakes sense. USAID had been in E.G. before we broke off diplomatic relations in the mid 70's, and when they left, they behind a great many heavy duty trucks. When the U.S. came back, the trucks were still there, many wrecked or rusted out, but there. What CLUSA did was to teach Guineans how to rehabilitate the trucks by repairing those they could and cannibalizing parts from trucks that were too far gone. This created a group of pretty competent Guinean mechanics. Once the trucks were up and running again, CLUSA worked with farmers to develop ways of using the trucks to take the crops they had grown to the markets in the cities. This training stressed maintenance since un-

maintained trucks wouldn't last, and an entrepreneurial spirit since access to markets via the trucks encouraged farmers to grow more to sell more. They were also moving into exports. It tried to teach farmers how to organize their products for export. I thought it was excellent idea. It didn't cost a lot of money. Nobody could get rich on CLUSA, and there was nothing to steal. The Guineans in the program came away with a skill and eventually would be running the operation themselves. The government, of course, didn't understand what CLUSA was doing, and put lots of stumbling blocks in their way, like hitting the farmers with contrived export taxes when they tried to exports their products. The idea of people making money on their own really bothered some of the Guinean bureaucrats, and, instead of encouraging exports and the money they would bring into the country, they did their best to stifle them.

The Peace Corps was supposed to come to E.G. to work on these kinds of projects, but as of the time I left, none of the volunteers had arrived. I had actually arranged for the Peace Corps to come to E.G. although I have never been overly impressed with them. I suppose getting all those young people who can't find jobs out of the country and putting them on the dole in some foreign country where they can't do too much damage is not such a bad idea.

Q: Were there any Soviets or Chinese involved there?

RUDDY: Yes. The Soviets went from about 200 plus when we got there to about 50-60 by the time we left. The Chinese also had a very big presence, in the hundreds. Many of the Chinese were on the mainland where they ran all the government's telecommunications. They also ran the national ship. There was a Guinean crew too, the captain might actually have been a Guinean, but that was all for show. Once the ship got underway, the Guineans disappeared, and the Chinese took over. The Chinese also did most of the things requiring technical skills. They also avoided controversies and kept out of everybody's way. They went about their own business. The embassy types were very pleasant to deal with, and everybody's great hope was to be invited to the Chinese

embassy for a dinner of endless courses of wonderful food. Of their hundreds in E.G., many were manual laborers whom we seldom saw. All the others, diplomats, doctors and other higher ranking Chinese lived in town lived together in a large four-storied building in the center of town. The Chinese were not very active politically in E.G.

Q: Did you feel that the Soviets were sort of a receding wave or something?

RUDDY: Yes, indeed. I'd like to think I was able to arouse some very pro American sympathies in the Guineans, and that was what cooled relations between The Russians and E.G. Truth is, with SDI and al the extra costs it involved for the USSR, they had to cut back around the world. E.G. had to be at the top of their cut list. The Russians lent the planes that were the national airline, but when they became too dangerous to fly, the Russians didn't want to pick up the tab to repair them. The stories of flights on those planes were right out of Lawrence Durrell.

The Russian ambassador, Boris Krasnakov, was a Stalinist. He was really somebody right out of a Dostoevsky novel, a nice man of the land, somebody who had worked in a cooperative somewhere, had come up through the Party apparatus and, as a reward or punishment, had been sent to this place. He was never going to go any place else and was there for a long time. They called him el embajador vitalicio, a joke meaning him the lifetime Ambassador to E.G. He was described in an '84 article in the London Sunday Times as an “aging drunk.” He had apparently rolled his car on the airport road on Sunday a.m., and the embassy staff was called out to put it back on the road. Boris spoke reasonably good Spanish although he would not speak to you in Spanish in any formal setting; he would go through a translator. I don't know if that was because he was being observed (Were the translators KGB?) or whether he just wanted the extra time to think. The Russians were quite active. They were forever doing rotten things, just like their counterparts Boris Badanov and Natasha. And not just nasty things, but stupid things as well. We always had to be on the qui vive. Any activity we had in the city, for example, always had to have fall back plans because the Russians were capable of sabotaging our

events. On one occasion the power line was carefully cut, and the only ones who could have benefited from that were the Russians. After that incident, we always had to have a generator on stand-by in case the power went off.

They also did some silly things. The level was just childish. Their ambassador was out of the country, (that was when their embassy played), and I got a call one night, at home by myself, from a Russian asking me to go to the Beiruth, basically the only restaurant in town and Malabo's answer to Rick's in Casablanca, to meet him and to discuss something important. So I went. When I got to the place there were three Russians sitting at the table and I went over and said, “I am here.” They said they knew nothing about it. So I went to the owner and told him I had just gotten a call from somebody who said he was a Russian diplomat. He said, “Yes, that man right over there. He just used the phone,” pointing to the Russian I had just spoken to. Their idea of a joke was to get the American Ambassador to come down there. In the 7th grade, that might have been funny.

Q: You can be basically relaxed about it.

RUDDY: Yes. As I said, Malabo may have had many negatives, but it was safe. The day after we bombed Tripoli, I called Armengol, the head of the government's secret police, and the President's brother, and said, “We are going to need some extra support around here in case someone gets some ideas.” An Aeroflot plane came from Tripoli to Malabo each week, and if you were looking for a place to retaliate, Malabo was a soft touch. He said, “In case you didn't know it, you have had police around your embassy since last night. We arrested one man in back of the embassy. He didn't belong there, but we don't think he was a terrorist.” So they were on the ball. The Russians in E.G. had descended to pranksters, and we let it go at that.

Before I leave the subject of the Tripoli raid, on April 16, 1986, the day after the raid, our embassy cars were cheered in the streets of Malabo. It wasn't just us. Qadhafi had put

Teodoro on his death list (being on Qadhafi's death list was a sign that you had arrived among many African leaders), so there was little sympathy for him in E.G.

The Cubans were in E.G., but they were so hard up...their ambassador had to borrow money from the Spanish ambassador to go out to the Beirut. We know this because the Spanish ambassador mentioned it, not critically but sympathetically. The North Koreans were no better off. They took their duty free liquor and tobacco and had what amounted to duty free garage sales every once in a while at the Korean embassy. Totally illegal, of course. They also got mixed up in some scheme to buy Guinean passports from some Foreign Ministry official, and the government refused agr#ment to their new ambassador. They paid off the wrong people. The East Germans were not there; they were in Sao Tome and Principe.

It's fortunate that the country was as safe as it was because our security was a joke. State's security people might do a fine job in some places, but the security people who came over from Yaounde did not inspire much confidence. One particularly bureaucratic security type announced, on his arrival, that the entire embassy staff would have to assemble for a security briefing. With everybody present, he demonstrated self-defense and in the process wound up shooting himself with Mace.

There had been an attempted coup, summer of '86, I was home, and the number two was telling me that this same security fellow came to Malabo for three days shortly after the coup attempt. As he was getting ready to leave and go back to Yaounde and at the end of the third day, the DCM said, “Clarence, you have been here for three days, and you are our security officer. You haven't asked one thing about the coup attempt.” His reply: “What coup attempt?” That was the man in whose care the State Department entrusted our security.

The way it works, you know, is that State's security “pro” was supposed to come over from Yaounde and do a security evaluation of our embassy. In fact, we would do the evaluation

ourselves and then give it to the security officer, and he would sign it. Apparently, in at least one case, the security officer had a real literacy problem and was not able to write the report himself. The irony was that at one point we asked for a shotgun just in case we needed to protect ourselves. We thought that if anything awful ever happened a shotgun would keep people from coming up the stairs. The security people said, “No. On the basis of the security evaluation we don't think you need it.” I found this sort of interesting because we had done the evaluation. Anyway security was a joke. Fortunately we never never had to rely on them. They didn't inspire confidence.

Q: You were running your own show but not much support anywhere...?

RUDDY: No, that's not so. There was no support from Security, but they were the exceptions. In general we got great support from Washington. Jim Moran, who was the management chief for the Africa Bureau in State, was terribly helpful. Anything we wanted that was reasonable, and a lot that wasn't so reasonable, we got. We needed a truck one time, but he diverted a shipment already at sea, and we got it in weeks. Now this is Africa, and to get a truck you usually wait years. State people in general were as helpful as can be. And the Desk officers couldn't have been more helpful. They tried to do whatever they could.

That surprised me. Because of the Helms business I thought there would be a lot of resentment, and I would get a cold shoulder at the State Department. I couldn't have been more wrong. I found nothing but helpfulness there.

Q: I think once you are in the system you are part of the team.

RUDDY: Yes, that's probably right. All the State people I dealt with were extremely helpful, extremely professional. There is no place I enjoyed more in my entire life than working for the State Department, and, although I didn't agree with many of my colleagues on politics, I thought the people there were, as a class, the brightest and most interesting I had ever come across. And, as far as I was concerned, extremely helpful. As I said security was

an area where I felt State wasn't too helpful, but security people really weren't State. They were just Burns detectives without uniforms. There were bureaucratic reasons why we didn't get better communications, but the people we actually dealt with tried to help. Once they were there and saw the situation they really had to be sympathetic. The Agency people were outstanding. I had expected them to all look like Robert Culp with sunglasses and trench coats— they do all wear sunglasses. That must be a requirement. What surprised me is that I thought they were the best linguists in the foreign affairs agencies, better than the State Department FSO's; they are the best educated, all with advanced degrees in one thing or another. Very impressive group. They too were extremely helpful as the following incident demonstrates.

There was a USAID fellow, based in Yaounde, who used to visit the continental part of E.G. frequently to oversee CLUSA activities. While there, it transpired, he took time to go around the country paying Guineans for information on wages and economic conditions in the country, identifying himself as a CIA agent. I can tell you about this because it is, as you shall see, in the public domain. One of the people he was paying for this information was a Guinean working for CLUSA. The employee told or let it slip to the head of CLUSA, an American, and he went ballistic. He came storming into my office asking: “What are you doing to us? You are going to compromise CLUSA and ruin us with this government? I know you are going to deny that he is a CIA agent because you will have to, but this is an outrageous way for the government to deal with one of its own PVO's.” I said, “Well, if he were a CIA agent, I guess I would deny it, but as a matter of fact he doesn't work for the CIA. That I can assure you. If he were do you think he would go around telling everyone he was a CIA agent?” When I talked to the Agency people about it they were as embarrassed as anybody and confirmed what I already knew. “Of course he is not one of ours.” I then had to go to the government and see my friend, Armengol, because if I knew, I had to be about the last person to hear about it. With E.G.'s police, and their sources of information being what they were, they knew all about this guy . I had to make sure they

knew we were not sneaking somebody in on them. Armengol said he had heard nothing of the story, but that was just the wily Armengol.

To return to your question, I categorize the support we got as outstanding.

Q: You left there in 1988. How did you feel when you left?

RUDDY: Sad. FSI gives you a course on how to work when you get there, but they never say how to leave. It was very hard. We had made some good friends there. It was the right time to go though because I was getting too close to the country. I was getting too sympathetic and could see that I might not be objective anymore. I actually stayed on six months longer than expected as a favor to the State Department because of a screw up. There was a report in the Washington Post in September, 1987 that State was planning to close some consulates and an embassy. The embassy would either be in The Comoros or Equatorial Guinea, according to the story. VOA picked up the Post story and reported it as a news story in its Spanish service. The Minister of Defense who lived next door to us heard the story on VOA's Latin America service and reported it to the Foreign Minister who called me in. The Foreign Minister and President didn't distinguish between the VOA's reporting news and an official announcement. They reasoned that since the U.S. Government runs VOA, what VOA says must be a pronouncement by the United States Government. If VOA reported that we were going to close the embassy in E.G., it must be so. I had been given about 7 minutes notice of that broadcast by our consulate in Douala which had called to say VOA was about to broadcast the Post story. I telephoned Chet Crocker and amazingly, got through to him.

Q: He was Assistant Secretary for African Affairs.

RUDDY: It was very, very rare that anyone was able to get through to the States, my call might have been the first, not that Crocker wouldn't take calls but due to technical reasons. I knew Crocker well; we used to testify together. I said, “Chet, what the hell is going on here? I just got called in to see the Foreign Minister over that VOA broadcast of the Post

story. They are v-e-r-y upset. They say that the way this closing was announced shows that it wasn't a mistake; it was a deliberate attempt to embarrass the country." He said something like, "Frank, it is a preliminary notification of a possible decision, and while it is by no means definitive, I can't say it's not true." I said, "Chet, this is me. Save the gobbledegook for your staff meetings. What is going on?" After some more to-ing and fro-ing, he said he didn't know.

What happened was that I had to go back to see the Foreign Minister again. I said that he was absolutely right to be outraged at this, that I hadn't heard a word before the VOA story, and that I felt foolish as well. I tried to convince him that I would have given him a heads up if I knew the news story, and that there was absolutely no percentage or advantage surprising them this way. I told him he and the President deserved an apology for the way the whole matter was handled. I apologized and said that as far as I knew no final decision had been made.

In retrospect, the flap over the VOA story was the best thing that could have happened to keep the embassy. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if State proposed the closing to pacify Hill demands for budget cuts and then leaked the story to create such an uproar that the closing couldn't go through.

In any event, An Assistant Secretary of State was sent to Malabo with a letter from President Reagan to President Obiang apologizing for this mistake. But it was a big incident so instead of leaving at the end of September as I was expected to, I was asked to stay on until March.

Q: To keep the continuity...

RUDDY: To keep the continuity. The new ambassador, Chester Norris, was having a rough time with Spanish at FSI, so the extra time allowed him more time to practice the subjunctive. Unfortunately for him, the extra time didn't seem to do much good.

E.G. was an extraordinary experience. Consider this. In mid-life the government swoops down and sends you somewhere to learn the most spoken language in the world (after English). It's not only free; they pay you while you are learning for the four months... Exxon wouldn't do that. They send your children to school in Spain. The boys got their own special international experience. E.G. has become a metaphor for our whole life. People who we met there, things that we did there, are the basic common experiences of the whole family. As I said, the two youngest boys are absolutely fluent in Spanish. One is reading Quixote in the original this year at Holy Cross; the other one did it at Columbia last year. Our third son is in NYU and is going to Madrid in January. He spent about a year with us over there. Spanish has gotten into his blood too. It has been just an extraordinary experience. It is like something out of Gabriel Garcia Marquez ...a family transported to the other side of the world. We had to get plague shots to go there. Plague shots. That tells you it's not Atlantic City. Where everybody got malaria. Where we advised relatives not to visit because it was so expensive to get there and were afraid they would get sick. And yet it turned out to be the most extraordinary experience that any of us have ever had.

Q: I want to thank you very much.

RUDDY: My pleasure. This took longer...

Q: No, no, this is just perfect.

End of interview